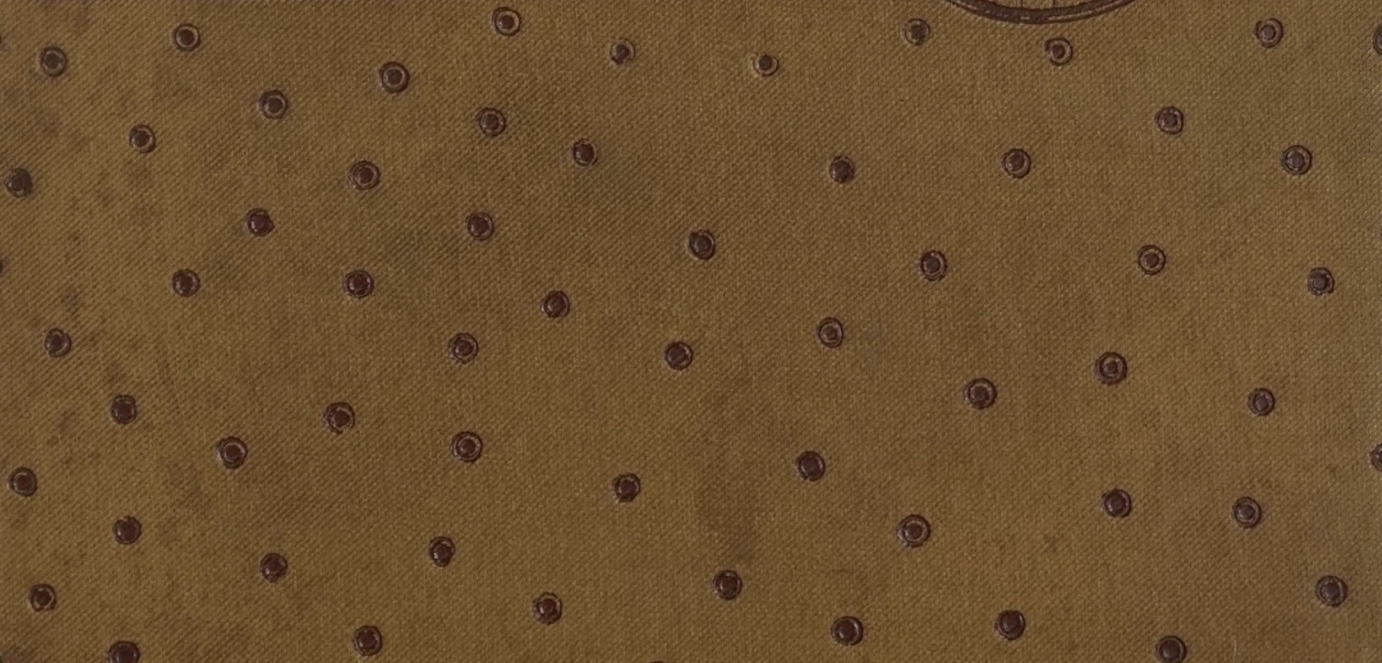


THE ONLY ONE

HARRY W. FRENCH





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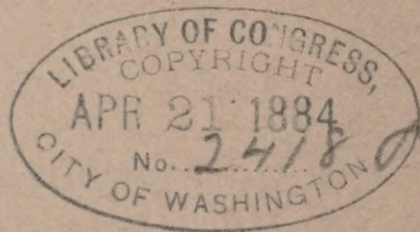
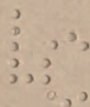
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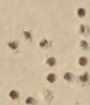
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THE ONLY ONE.



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TO
THE ONLY ONE.



THE ONLY ONE.

CHAPTER I.

AMOS CARLETON married. He married for beauty ; his wife married for wealth. It was an even exchange, and, as the two most interested saw very little of each other between ten in the morning and ten at night, the little spice of something like love which was sprinkled in lasted them to the end. They received what they bargained for, and, supposing that they loved each other properly, they went through life together without so much as knowing what love really was, and surely never missing it.

Mr. Carleton began life as a banker, and rapidly accumulated a fortune. From the outset of his career he was marked as one of the few men of the world who are profoundly and mysteriously successful in everything. He had far too much on his hands to be what is tenderly termed a family man. He never attempted anything of the sort ; nothing of the kind was ever expected of him, and hence his wife was saved that very popular agony of fancying that

her husband's love was cooling when business demanded every thought.

Carleton Cottage, their beautiful country seat, was one of the fairest in the land, and so near the great city that the busy proprietor was driven to his office behind a pair of fiery blacks in the morning, thus realizing his sum and substance of the luxury of wealth.

The grounds about the cottage were extensive and full of nooks and corners, groves and gardens, walks and fountains, arbors and arches. There were statues here and there, antique and ancient statues, life-size, some of them, half hidden in the shrubbery or standing out boldly like sentinels. It even suggested to one the famous villa parks of Italy. And there were no great iron dogs, or huge painted deer, to remind us that we were after all in the cruder Western world.

The cottage itself was as beautiful as the grounds. It was low and large, but there were no legalized gables and stereotyped angles. There were so many projections of all sorts and sizes that it was hard to say where the body of the house ended and where the wings began, or indeed if it were not all body, or perhaps all wings.

In time two children came to Carleton Cottage; a boy first, and four years later a girl. When the boy was six months old, the father and mother stood before the altar and heard the name of Osgood bestowed upon the little one. It was the first time that Amos Carleton had stood in the shadows of a church since his marriage. It was a fearfully oppressive in-

action. Even upon that former occasion he had said to the clergyman, "Hurry through it, or we shall lose the train." And now he gave him but one name to pronounce in order that he might have it so much the sooner over with. Then he hastened from the church to the city to keep an appointment, which he would not have missed for all the church services in Christendom.

The girl was two years old before the father found time to devote to her baptism. "Mary" was as long a name as he could endure. It was quite too long for common conversation, and "Maime" was instantly substituted.

Little Maime was hardly five years old when her mother died. This was a sudden blow to Amos Carleton, for it was something he had never figured upon in his estimates of profit and loss. He paused for a moment in the whirl of the rapids; but before he could arrange the matter clearly in his mind, or realize the situation of the two little ones, holding his hands in silent wonder by the coffin and the grave, the whole picture was swept away, and Amos Carleton was looking something far more dreadful in the face. In truth, this keen-eyed man of business was very nearly overwhelmed in the sea of finance. Had his wife lived a little longer he might possibly have been tempted to test her friendship in a frank confession. He might have said to her, "I am a ruined man. I have carried a high hand, but at last I have lost. Shall we turn back again, and with nothing to start upon begin life over?"

They might have suddenly discovered that they actually and really loved each other—or quite the contrary, who knows? But when, instead, he saw only those two helpless little orphans clinging to his hands he shook his head, and muttered, “No!”

Then again he turned toward the city.

How it came about that all went on without an interruption, no one knew; but no one wondered, for Amos Carleton was one of those exceptional business men, so thoroughly capable of taking care of his own affairs, as well as controlling the concerns of others, that no one considered it possible for him to become financially embarrassed; no one was on the lookout for such a state of things. An expensive governess was engaged to care for the children, and economy was an unknown quantity.

No one asked where the money came from, for it was a foregone conclusion that Amos Carleton had a limitless supply.

Years came and went. The children grew up, seeing little of the world, but perfectly happy in their lovely home, realizing a peculiar reverence for that kindly dictator whom they called father; never more than that. Strangers with whom they came in contact called them “peculiar.” Surely it would have been absurd to have pitied them.

“Murder will out,” they say; but twelve years went by, and no murder did out. Instead of curtailing expenses, private tutors were added to the family. Gold was as free as air, and Osgood Carleton’s classical education even was completed before he had ever

seen what men call the world. But his tutors were proud of him, his sister was proud of him, his father was proud of him: he was proud of himself. It was with him a pride of being, however, much more than a pride of birth or position. His face was not handsome, but a contraction of thoughtfulness in the forehead, blending in the spirit of a smile faintly suggesting itself about the lips, produced a combination both attractive and trustworthy. When he spoke, which was not when it was quite as convenient to avoid it, he spoke slowly and said as little as would completely cover the case in hand; for, owing to his peculiar youth, he already looked upon life more as a philosopher than as a man. Whatever he undertook he began systematically, and with an avowed intention to succeed. Failure is a bad word. He never employed it.

Maime was as like her brother metaphysically, and as unlike him physically, as could well be imagined. Together they were all the world to each other.

When the tutors said farewell to Carleton Cottage, however, a matter of grave importance appeared before the young man. He thought it over seriously, and made up his mind. Then he talked with Maime, and with tears in her blue eyes she agreed with him. At breakfast the next morning he said to his father, "Am I to study for a profession or go into business?"

Amos Carleton started from a reverie, very much as he had the morning when he discovered that his

wife was dying. But quietly enough he asked, "Which do you prefer?"

"I should like to study medicine," Osgood replied, looking up doubtfully; for he apprehended that his father's success would induce him to wish his son to follow the same business. Could he have looked into the heart as easily as into the face before him, he would have had no misgivings.

"Do you know which school is the best?" his father asked indifferently a moment later.

Osgood replied without hesitation.

"When does the term begin?" Amos Carleton was moving his chair from the table; for his carriage had just passed the window, and he would not have waited a moment longer for anything less than a funeral or a baptism.

"It begins in a week, sir," Osgood replied, also rising.

His father turned suddenly as he reached the door, looking at him in a wild, vacant way for a moment. The strange sensations of that day of the funeral were sweeping over him. Then he turned his back, ground his teeth, and muttered as he closed the door, "You had better make your arrangements and apply."

Osgood shuddered, as the voice grated harshly on his ears. He stood there watching the closed door and wondering what it meant, till Maime came in and recalled him to the duty of making arrangements, as his father had directed.

He entered the medical school just as he would have set himself to solve a mathematical proposition.

He had certain properties to obtain certain results. It was perfectly rational. There was no reason why he should not attain them, nor any reason why he should attempt anything else until he had attained them. The world was new to him, but for the present he cared as little for it as though he were at Carleton Cottage. For the present he proposed to master the mysteries of medicine, and of men as a mass of flesh and blood and bones; not as moving spirits in the world, full of designs and plots and ambitions. He had not attempted to study faces. They were yet an unopened book to him, but he had no doubt that when he attempted to master them he could understand them as easily as a page of Homer or an oration of Cicero. What did he care for faces now? He did not even look at them. He could not have told the color of his sister's hair, though he had a vague idea that it was very beautiful. He was not even sure that his father wore a beard. As a matter of necessity, he succeeded in the medical school.

At the end of two years he had formed but one friendship. But that was a right strong one. The subject was Guy Underwood, a student a year below him; a dark-skinned, fiery Southerner, well imbued, however, with the freer principles of the North; a jovial fellow; one given to looking thoroughly into everything, even to the best way of making squash pies and custard puddings, and perfectly posted in all the latest styles.

Guy Underwood was a much keener observer of

men. He was well satisfied with this friendship, and willingly accepted an invitation to spend his summer vacation at Carleton Cottage.

"You are an odd stick," Guy said one day, as they stood facing each other, with foils trembling between them. "Why didn't you join one of the clubs?" He paused for a moment, as a threatening motion demanded his closest attention, then added, "You must have had an education as broad as it was deep. But why in the world didn't you show up to the boys, and make the fellows stand round a little when they called you a book-worm?"

"I went there to study medicine," Osgood replied, making a successful parry, and a more successful thrust, and planting his powdered tip fair upon the red heart on his friend's buckskin vest.

Underwood threw down his foil in disgust. "There's three to one," he exclaimed, "and I can beat even Middleton two in three."

"Who is Middleton?" Osgood asked indifferently, as he moderately picked up the foil, and carefully hung the two in their proper place.

"Humbug!" muttered the Southerner, lighting a cigarette and turning with his friend toward the lawn. "Don't tell me that you don't know the best fencer, the biggest bully, and the poorest scholar in your own class."

"I never touched a foil in the city, and I never heard the name, so far as I remember," Osgood replied, listlessly.

"That fellow with sandy hair and little eyes,

always biting one end of his yellow mustache," said Underwood. He was not so fond of the characteristics of the North as of its theories.

"If he didn't like it, why didn't he cut it off?" Osgood asked, more thoughtfully.

"Bosh! You must remember him!" his friend repeated, impatiently.

"Well, my dear fellow, I do not. I never saw a bully with sandy hair chewing a yellow mustache, in my life."

With a modest grunt the Southerner threw himself upon a bench in a rustic arbor. "I don't wonder the fellows called you a book-worm," he exclaimed. "You read a page of Greek or Latin, French or German, as though they were English, and can tell one good-for-nothing old saw-bones from another, just by the way he cuts up meat, and then don't know a man you have seen every day for two years in the class-room. I didn't suppose you would know a foil from a toothpick, or a pistol from a pop-gun, either, and here you've snuffed a candle where I couldn't hit the bull's-eye, and you wipe me clean at fencing, every time. I say! why didn't you show up what you were to the boys?"

"There's time enough for that, by and by," Osgood replied, with a low laugh. "Just now I have nothing to do, and I am trying to do it. In the city I am busy."

"Don't believe you went out to dinner once," said the Southerner, watching a wreath as it rolled away from his cigarette.

"Yes, I did, once," replied the other, laughing. "But it was all nonsense. I would n't go again."

"But, my dear fellow, how do you ever expect to get on in the world, without knowing it? Do you expect that some pretty girl will come walking up to you in the street, one of these days, and tell you to marry her?"

"Marry? Nonsense, Guy! I shall never marry. I 'am going to live with Maime."

Guy Underwood smiled. "You are quite the fellow to say that. Why, man! you don't know a woman from a rag baby. You'll tumble into it the first time you set your eyes on a trap."

"Then it is just as well that, from preference, I look the other way," said Osgood, rather inattentively. But a moment later he was listening more closely, as his friend continued, —

"And don't lay too heavy an investment on always having that pretty sister of yours to live with. Some one will come this way by and by and pick her up before you can say boo! and two's company where three is a crowd then, you know."

Osgood looked at Guy Underwood, much as his father had once looked at him. It was a new idea, not over-agreeable, and he was very like his father in many respects. He thought upon it for a moment, and then said, abruptly, "Marry her yourself, Guy, and go halves with me."

"It might take more than two to make that bargain," Guy replied, laughing, as he threw his cigarette away and turned toward the house, quite willing

to do whatever lay within his power to please his friend in so slight a matter.

Left alone, Osgood began to meditate. The confines of Carleton Cottage seemed too close for him; he wandered away from them and over the hill, rising beyond, covered by one of the most picturesque cemeteries of America. It was just such as the resting-place of the dead should be, much better than the gloomy church vaults and horrible catacombs.

He wandered on, intent upon nothing in particular, wondering if, after all, it might not be better for him to know a little more of the world in which he was obliged to live and move for the time being.

Thus meditating, he slowly approached a humble pony phaeton and a grizzled gray pony standing beside a lot surrounded by a modest iron paling. Inside the fence there were two grave-stones, and beside them a little country maid upon her knees, preparing to set out some flowers.

It was late in the year for this work. He wondered what sort of flowers she was setting out so late, and drew a little nearer. Gardening was a passion born with him, and a moment later, without so much as realizing the fact, he was leaning on the iron rail.

"Cosgove" was the name written upon the head-stones. "Mother and father," he said to himself, and looked pityingly at the little waif bending over the flowers.

"Those calla lilies will do better if you plant them

in the shade, miss," he observed, leisurely; and, in much the same spirit in which he would have touched a spider with a straw, he watched the little gardener, and wondered what the result would be.

"Why is that?" she asked, turning without rising.

"They need moisture," he replied indifferently. Why should he care where she planted her lilies?

"They will run to leaves there," she said. "I would rather have them flower."

Osgood smiled. It began to appear somewhat important, after all, just where she planted those lilies. "It is too late for them to flower this season, anywhere, and you have a rosebush there that will live all winter, and will do much better in the sun."

Again she thought it over. "I think you are right," she said. "I will plant it there."

She did not proceed upon the strictest principles of art, and out of pity for the flowers the medical student observed, "I am very fond of gardening, and have had some little instruction. If you wish I will set them out for you." She looked up in surprise.

"I beg your pardon, miss, I was bolder than I meant to be," he added, possibly a little confused. "My

name is Carleton, Osgood Carleton. I live in the cottage, yonder, by the elms. I am at home on my vacation, with nothing to do, and I thought that wandering over this hill would be a good way to do it.

You were not planting those flowers very well, and I knew that the flowers would not do well by you to pay for it, so I offered to help you. I suppose it was rude, and I will go away if I annoy you."

"You need not go till you have planted the flowers, if you really enjoy it," she said with a little smile; and it suddenly occurred to him that the face was very pretty down in the depths of that sun-hat, when a smile lit up the shadows. He began work as her gardener; and, leaning upon the tombstone, she continued, "I know it is very late for this work, but though it is ten years since my mother died, this is the first time I have seen her grave."

"Do you remain here long?" the student asked, as he shook the rose-bush from the pot. He paused for a moment to examine the roots, and wonder why he had asked it.

"My aunt has brought me here to live with my grandmother, and I think we shall remain," the maid replied, simply and frankly, as she took the empty pot and laid it outside the paling. "I have some mignonette seed here. Where will you sow that?"

The medical gardener did not reply at once. He was thinking more of the speaker than of what she said, and wondering if all young women were about alike. It suddenly occurred to him that in the common course of things he was expected to say something, and starting a little abruptly from his revery, he exclaimed, "Mignonette! Mignonette! Why, of course! Mignonette is one of the best things to sow late, but it is quite too late now even for that. But my gardener has any amount of it already planted and well started. If you will wait I will go down and get some, or if you are coming another day I

will bring you up some plants that will do much better than new seed, at any rate."

She smiled. The innocence of the man amused even a country girl. But as frankly as he had spoken, she replied that she proposed visiting that grave every Saturday morning at eleven o'clock, unless her aunt or her grandmother, or possibly the weather, prevented, and if he chose, some day, to bring some mignonette, she should be very much obliged.

That was all. Then they parted. Saturday morning at eleven o'clock. He might have forgotten a wedding or dinner party in ten minutes, but Saturday morning at eleven o'clock! He felt sure he should remember that.

"If I should tell Guy of this," he said to himself, as he wandered down the hill, "h'm, he'd think I was coming on. Miss Cosgrove — a tolerably pretty name. I will make a note of it. Father died in 1841, mother in 1850. She's twenty years old, or more. I didn't suppose she was fifteen, or I should have been more careful. Living on charity, with an aunt and a grandmother; not a very interesting thing to do, I fancy, but she seemed well educated, at least. She had a fine head of hair. I wonder what color it was. I wonder if I should know her if I met her anywhere else. Confound it! I've forgotten how she looked, already, but she was pretty. Poor thing, I'm sorry for her, living with an aunt and a grandmother!"

He walked slowly, and before he had reached Carleton Cottage he had begun distinctively to pity

her, and to wish that he might aid her in some more important way than simply planting rose-bushes. He found the gardener, and directed him to make a collection of plants most appropriate for the season, and have them ready for him at ten o'clock on Saturday morning. And having thus settled the matter he set it aside, only stopping now and then in the midst of a cigar or a conversation with Guy to hope that the terrible aunt and the grandmother would not stand in the way on Saturday morning at eleven o'clock.

CHAPTER II.

IT was rather provoking, as they sat on the veranda, Friday evening, that Maime should suggest, "Let's go on an all-day drive to the hills to-morrow."

Her brother had never in his life objected to driving, but, strangely enough, he looked as high as his sister's chin, from a dangerous knight on the chess-board, and asked, "Would not Monday do as well?"

Without her usual forethought Maime challenged him with an impromptu "Why?"

"Chiefly because I have an engagement to-morrow," her brother replied, between a cause and effect on the chess-board, from which he did not again look up. "I could not go with you, and you and Guy would be lonesome without me. See?"

"Then Monday, of course," said Maime, with a low laugh, as she set herself again to urging on the fancy work which lay in her lap, quite as though nothing had happened. She was very sure, however, that something of decided importance had happened, or was about to; and one of the most admirably developed of Maime's admirable qualities was curiosity. It was not of that fiendish sort, but simply of a mischievous order, calculated to keep her well posted upon all that was going on, and above all she was passionately fond of vexing her wise brother by

knowing a great deal more about everything than he knew about it. He had quite ignored her in failing to open his heart about this mysterious engagement, — the very best of reasons why she should at once proceed to understand the whole. She made a valuable lieutenant of Guy, in spite of his protestations; and Osgood wondered how it came about that upon that Saturday morning of all others, his friend seemed to prefer his society to that of his sister. His company began to be a bore. Osgood Carleton wondered why. It was past ten, yet Guy was vexingly contented.

Dryly enough, Osgood remarked that he was going to see the gardener, and turned away.

"There's nothing in the world I like so much as flowers; let me go with you," said Guy.

His friend looked at him almost in despair. Guy only laughed. "Come on!" he said, "let's go and find the gardener."

Carleton led the way, and naturally went where he felt sure the gardener could not be found. But naturally, too, in that peculiar fatality of inanimate incidents, they met the gardener at the first turn; met him with the basket of flowers on his arm.

"They've been out of the ground this half-hour, Mr. Osgood," said he, "and they're beginning to wilt. They orter be sot out directly."

The unsophisticated knight took the basket, and in a rather irregular fashion, succeeded in making his friend understand that he expected to be back in an hour. Then he walked away, looking as much as possible as though he had no idea of going over to the

cemetery ; while Guy, with his hands thrust into the pockets of his smoking-jacket, sought his pretty blond general, and reported that her brother had gone away for an hour, with a basket of flowers on his arm. Maime laughed outright, and her blue eyes wandered up over the cemetery hill.

By some peculiar conjunction the grandmother, the aunt, and the weather were all as agreeable as heart could wish ; for the distant village clock had hardly ceased tolling when the gray pony and the humble phaeton appeared. "She knows how to be on time," the medical student observed, with some satisfaction.

The pony would stand anywhere, even by the green grass of the graveyard, and the two met and proceeded with their work of decoration, more like old friends than might have been the case with any of natures less frank and simple. And when the flowers were all planted they wandered together over the brow of the hill, which, you know, commands one of the finest views in all the country. Then they parted. There was no further appointment made, yet each was confident that in the good old-fashioned way they should meet again, and that the rendezvous would still be the tombstone. It happened more than once and more than twice, till Osgood Carleton felt sure that he should know the little country girl, even if he were to meet her upon the street. He was sure, at least, that he should know that inevitable sun-hat and the inevitable gray pony.

This proved quite correct ; for one midsummer day, while he stood with Maime and Guy at the gate of

Carleton Cottage, he discovered beyond a doubt that the pony and sun-hat were approaching them. His first incentive was to fly; then he paused to wonder what there was to fly from, and in the end he gathered courage, saluted the pony, the phaeton, or the sun-hat, — he was a little doubtful which, — and Maime and Guy were introduced. Before he had fully revived from this struggle they were all engaged upon the mysteries of croquet, — that glorious game which had just appeared upon the horizon of out-door pleasures, and which has since been murdered in characteristic American fashion.

Guy was confounded. The fencing and target shooting were nothing to this, and Osgood certainly expected that Maime, too, would be astonished; but Maime was better pleased to vex her brother by taking it all as a matter of course and the most common of all occurrences. She was very well pleased with the stranger, too, and planned other meetings, and even said, one day, "I wish you would call me Maime. Formality does not come into the country so far as Carleton Cottage."

The little orphan thanked her, and blushed as she replied, "My name is Kate, plain Kate, and for short they call me Kit. I hate formality."

Then suddenly Osgood Carleton found himself unable to be so familiar as the rest. The precedence of a longer acquaintance failed him altogether. Some unseen hand was holding him back. Now and then he struggled to say "Miss Kittie," but power could not have forced him another step.

The vacation ended, and just a very indefinite image of a little country girl was all that in the end followed Osgood Carleton to the great city. Indefinite? Yes. But very real, after all. She appeared before him in his books, and twined herself through his thoughts. It annoyed him. For the first time he began to wonder who she was, and was vexed that he had forgotten to make a note of the color of her hair. In vain he struggled to place before his mind anything more real than the indistinct image of something inexpressibly lovely and lovable. Then he endeavored to eradicate the memory altogether. But it lingered, in utter indifference to his will; no more, no less, the same fond dream. He suddenly realized that he had done something more than study human nature in the cemetery, and indeed that he had failed to study human nature altogether, and had simply studied the human heart.

After calm deliberation he sent a message to "Miss Kittie," in a letter to his sister. He was conscious of a strange thrill of pleasure when a message was returned. Then he ventured a short note through the same mediator. He waited the reply as anxiously as though he had sent a first poem to a publisher. It came at last. It was quite as commonplace as his own; but it bore an address, a simple one, a little village two miles from his home. It is strange how slight an incident can lift a man from earth to heaven. His next letter was sent direct to Kittie Cosgrove, and reached its destination.

And now this man, who had not curiosity enough

to know by face or name the members of his own class, became conscious of an inordinate demand within him to know more, to know everything of this little country girl. He overcame a few conscientious scruples, and wrote to a friend in the village asking with careful carelessness about a family living there, composed of a grandmother, an aunt, and a victim who always drove about in a phaeton drawn by a gray pony.

His friend replied that such a family took a cottage there for the summer, and possibly had not yet removed. They were non-communicative neighbors, evidently in very moderate circumstances. They were much liked, he said, by those who knew them, and the young woman spent most of her time among the poor of the village.

The student was satisfied. It was better than he thought. He wrote again to Miss Kittie. He continued writing, and Miss Kittie as often replied.

The indistinct image, faint though it was, became the student's daily and almost hourly companion.

CHAPTER III.

IN the mean time Guy Underwood had not forgotten his resolution to carry his friend by force, if need be, into some of the excitements of city life; and he found the first steps much easier to take than he had feared. There was a restless, disturbing element in Osgood Carleton's life, at last, which rendered excitement a pleasant counteraction.

The theatre and opera, an occasional call with his friend, and an evening reception showed him more and more the wonders of the world; but the more he saw of the glories of it, the more he thought, deeply and earnestly, of Kittie Cosgrove. In the end these thoughts, thus guided, began to assume a more practical turn.

"Poverty," they said to him, "is keeping that little cottage open all the year. But poverty is no great fault. What do you see in any one of these beautiful women about you, that you do not find in Kittie Cosgrove? Anything that would be desirable in a wife? What more could you ask in her, unless that she loved you a little?"

Love! Wife! Frightful suggestions! He turned about and looked at himself as he had looked at his friend, and wondered what he could do with a wife. He had taken it for granted, thus far, that the little

maid thought of him precisely as he thought of her. Why not? But now it began to seem as though he loved her. The more he thought of it the more sure he became, and the more doubtful as to whether she had ever thought of loving him. She had never more than followed an example as he set it, — never taken a step in advance. It appeared appropriate that he should say something to suggest the change of opinion that had come over him. He arranged his next letter so that she should understand the discovery he had made. Then he was ashamed of it, and almost asked the postmaster to give it back to him.

"Guy," he said, abruptly, as they were crossing the common together, "does a man really love his wife in a distracted sort of way, and does she always love him in the same way before they marry?"

Guy blew a long, low whistle, cut a snow-drift with his cane, and replied, "Something of that sort, I believe. At all events, a good deal more of that nature before than afterward. Why?"

"Mother died when I was very young, you know, and I have not seen enough of other married people to know how it was. That is all." He looked up in surprise as Guy burst into an uncommonly boisterous laugh.

"Out with it, man," said Guy, a moment later. "You've fallen in love with some one yourself. Who is it?"

"I am not sure that I have fallen in love with any one," Carleton replied, thoughtfully. And again he

was greeted with a boisterous laugh, which he could not understand.

Guy saw the frown gathering on his friend's face, and added, more seriously, "I tell you what it is, Carleton, you're in danger. I warned you in advance, but it seems that that was not enough. You're a good fellow, and a great catch. You have become very popular in society, in return for the precious little I have been able to force you into it." Osgood interrupted him with a blank stare. He bore it patiently for a moment, then continued: "Don't act as though you didn't know what I mean. There's no reason why you shouldn't virtually make your own selection in the whole city this winter, saving a few exceptions here and there. Don't get mad. But I tell you, you know no more about women than a baby. Every man comes across a time in his life when the thing for him to do is to fall in love, and he generally does it. Fellows like you are very apt to love not wisely but too well, for the time being at least. It is instinctive; something like bees swarming. The first thing he does is to see a lady smile upon him, and the next thing is to fall head over ears in love with her; for he does n't know enough to tell one of them from another." He was growing excited. He brought his cane down with a dash, and covered his polished boots with snow. Osgood looked compassionately at the boots, but still listened attentively as his friend continued, "Nine tenths of all the matrimonial infelicity of this world is due to the fact that not one man in ten but would

fall in love with and marry a boot-black" (he was thinking of the accident), "if he were rigged in petticoats, and presented just in the nick of time. Man begins to love in the abstract, an ideal, something way beyond him, but he ends by going for the first thing to come within his range. If he miss the first time he tries again and again, till he succeeds at last; and the minute it is all over he begins to wonder how in the world he was ever such a fool, and to see that in reality he was loving something else. Then, alas for the poor woman! if she had really begun to love *him*. Now, I tell you, Carleton, God never brought it about that the more civilized and the better and wiser the world becomes, the more thoroughly it believes that the right way is to love one and only one, without also making it possible, at least, for that to be done and done handsomely. Now, if you find yourself falling in love, growing spoony, and all that sort of thing, you know, my advice to you is to step back and wait a little while. When the right woman comes along, you'll love her. You can't help it. You won't get over it by keeping out of her way. And if, on the other hand, you should get over it, it would probably be a blessed good thing for you that it happened before, not afterward. There's no use trying to make yourself think that you love some one, and then trying to make her love you. It can be done, and is done every day of the year. But there's a sequel to that sort of a story every time."

"You should have studied theology, Guy," said Osgood Carleton.

"Yes," returned the Southerner, with a laugh, "and devoted myself to preaching to the bishop. You're right, Carleton; you know a deuced sight more than I do about everything but the world. You can cut a man to pieces and put him together again better than any one in your class, and we all know it, but the trouble is you don't know anything about yourself. I knew you'd not be out with me for saying so. A mastiff does n't fight with a puppy no bigger than his tail."

"Shut up!" was Osgood Carleton's brief rejoinder, as they entered the medical-school building.

He was not at all angry, however. He had listened almost like a child in the midst of a fairy tale. He thought the matter over in the light of this cold-hearted philosophy, and determined that Guy was right. He would go more thoroughly into society, and look it over more carefully before he relied too firmly upon the little maid of the cemetery, or believed too strongly in those first impressions. A week later he had an opportunity to act further upon the resolution, in attending with his friend a reception tendered to one of the great men of the South by one of the great families of the North.

"Let me tell you something," said Guy, as they walked together toward the mansion. "I met a lady the other day. She is to be at the reception to-night. I am going to introduce you."

"You don't say so! Why did n't you mention it earlier?"

"No nonsense," said Guy; "I tell you she's stunning."

"Then you'd better think of your lecture instead of introducing me. If the fit should take me, you know —"

"You're joking on stern realities, Carleton. If the fit takes you, I assure you you can't do better than let it take; that is, of course, supposing that 'Barkis is willin'."

"Then there is a little engineering necessary, after all," said Osgood. "I thought that your glorious idea of true love was that it was a self-evident reality and an inexorable necessity. Now it really appears to me that you would simply have one fight against falling in love till he hit upon some one who, in cold blood, he determines is the right one for his wife, and then deliberately go ahead to fall desperately in love with her. If that be not cold blooded, what is?"

"Have mercy on me, do! and stop that horrible philosophy, Carleton, for a half-minute. I want to tell you about this lady. She has not been East very long. Her mother is a widow. They have very lately come from California. But I'll warrant you that every eligible fellow in the city has turned an eye that way. She and her mother have several million dollars between them. Her father was king of California bankers, I believe. Carrie Ashley is her name. Don't forget it, for I shall not shout it when I introduce you; and I don't want you to ask me all over again right before her face, the way you did the other night. But I warn you against just one thing. *Don't* fall in love with her."

With this parting shot, well calculated to have precisely the opposite effect, Guy dropped the subject till the time came for the introduction, and Osgood Carleton found himself before a being more beautiful than any he had ever seen before ; and, more than that, she smiled upon him.

Naturally enough, he was somewhat unprepared for this ; and, as weeks went by, though no one made less demonstration over the lovely Carrie Ashley than did Osgood Carleton, no one was more surely sinking in that most delightful delirium which some call love. It was such a novel enchantment that he had hardly encouragement to be vexed with himself, or even to wonder if it were that the laughing eyes were irresistible, or if it were the smile which always played about the lips that was bewildering him. Mentally intoxicated, he said to himself, "Guy is right. I must see more of society." Society ! Why did not some inner consciousness open his eyes to the fact that society was a bore ! never so much so as now, if by any chance Miss Ashley were not a part of it, and an utter nonentity at the best when he found himself beside her. But the more he thought of Carrie Ashley in the great city, the less he thought of Kittie Cosgrove in that lonely village. She seemed very plain and quiet and commonplace when, a little conscience-smitten, he compared her with "society." He wondered how it had been possible for him to become so imbued with memories of such a little country girl. "I was very unsophisticated ; Guy was right," he said to himself.

In the very act of thus expiating himself, he was conscious of something deeper than the enchantment which Carrie Ashley had thrown over him, rising in rebellion, charging him with being false to himself and false to Kittie Cosgrove; but he put away the thought in anger, and, realizing the bonds which bound him to the country girl more than the new ties which were toiling about him, he determined to break them. They were obnoxious. They were out of place and keeping with student-life. Utterly ignorant that he was simply making room for a new conqueror by displacing the old, he deliberately struggled to break the spell of the cemetery. His letters to the little village were fewer and shorter. The answers fell off in precisely the same ratio. "She is only an echo of myself, after all," he thought, and smiled as he realized how easily he had fallen before such an indifferent altar.

The waif shrank obediently back again into the cemetery, though not quite to oblivion. It began to be an intolerable bore to keep up that rose-bush gallantry through the winter. It interfered with his studies; and, much longer than usual after his last letter, he took his pen, kindly enough, he thought, and wrote: "Dear little friend, I am so busy with my studies that it seems impossible for me to enjoy, so often as I have, the pleasure of writing to you. You must not think that my interest in you wanes if my letters are not so frequent during the rest of the term."

He had not a thought of right or wrong to any one's

heart in the matter ; for he no sooner ceased to fancy that he loved Kittie Cosgrove than he also ceased to imagine it possible that she loved him. Why should he have thought that Carrie Ashley could have anything to do with this change ? She only represented to him that vague term "society," just as Kittie Cosgrove had for a moment made him think of "love." "It takes my breath away to look at her," he said, "but I must get myself used to that sort of thing."

Then he turned to his study again ; but, instead of the technical phraseology of the books, he was thinking of something Shakespeare said about being o'erwrought, and throwing a pearl away, richer than all his kind. He was wondering what could have suggested that, when Guy entered.

"I say, old fellow !" he exclaimed, "I want you to take me in to your operation this afternoon. You're a lucky dog to get that chance. Not another fellow in the class would have had it. I tell you it's not often that two such nabobs as Dr. Young and Carrie Ashley agree in thinking the same fellow the very top of the pile !"

"Carrie Fiddlesticks !" said Osgood. "I'd give more for the good opinion of one Dr. Young than of fifty Carrie Ashleys."

"So indeed would I, my dear fellow, in a medical way," replied Guy, apologetically ; "but when it comes to marrying, and, confound it, a fellow has got to marry some time, why then the good opinion of one Carrie Ashley would be worth more than that of fifty Dr. Youngs."

"I believe that you love her yourself," said Osgood, almost out of patience with his friend.

"Love her?" replied Guy, enthusiastically. "Why, man, I adore her!"

"Then why don't you marry her?" asked his friend, in a way that was not wholly indifferent.

"Aha! my dear fellow, you've touched a tender point there," said Guy; "and, if I must tell you, it is because I know just one little woman in this world who beats her all to —!" He brought his clinched fist down upon the table to finish the sentence.

"I doubt it!" There was a spark of energy in that, which made the stoic smile at himself, and Guy laughed outright as he replied, —

"So you are the fellow who is in love, eh? and ready to be jealous as a Moor at the mere thought that I might have a finger in the fight. That's a good sign, my boy. But never fear. I'm over my ears in love with some one else. I'll take back the lecture I delivered two months ago, and now that you've done it, I'll tell you frankly that I'm glad of it."

"Done what?" Osgood asked, looking up in astonishment.

"Don't! don't!" Guy moaned, as he threw himself into a chair; "don't put on any more of that stupidity with me. Why, even the fellows in your class, who declared as late as a month ago that you were nothing but a ponderous book-worm, have opened their eyes in astonishment. Who could help it, to see you deliberately walk off with the belle of the city, the heiress of the age, the most beautiful woman

in America! You, a good-for-nothing medical student! There, now, stop looking at me, and tell me if you will get me a chance to see the operation which you and Dr. Young are trying to keep all to yourselves."

"Of course I will," Osgood replied, absently, without moving his wondering eyes from his friend. And even after Guy was gone, he sat staring at the door, as though that might explain something if it would. He was astounded. He studied himself more than his books. He wondered if there were any truth in what Guy said, and determined to be painfully circumspect in the future. He still had an idea that love was very like a disease, to be regulated by a few drops of the will. This resolve had scarcely come into command when jealousy put in an appearance, and routed all the well-regulated forces, lacking, as they did, a veteran self-control.

"Sir Edgar Stanley," that was the villain's name. He at once commended himself to Osgood Carleton as a villain, chiefly because he had repeatedly met the man in Miss Ashley's parlor, and with astonishing perception had discovered that, more than any other guest, he smiled, and smiled most graciously, upon Miss Ashley. The medical student astonished Guy Underwood by asking him, abruptly, one Sunday afternoon, if he knew Sir Edgar Stanley. Of course he knew him. Guy Underwood knew every one. But he looked up as who should say, "How in the world have you succeeded in keeping a name and a face together long enough to ask a question about

them?" Then recalling the rumors that Sir Edgar was a frequent visitor at the Ashley mansion, he smiled, and replied, "He is said to be an English nobleman."

"Of course. But what else?" demanded the other.

"Well, to be a little more expansive with you, as a friend, it is my private opinion that he is a first-class fraud. That's just between us, you know; for society would lynch me if it knew I had whispered such a thought of its idol. The ladies are too busy repeating his title to think much of the man. He looks like the veriest pink-and-white saint that ever sailed the Great Invisible, and I've no doubt he acts like one, too, when he is in good society. He's a handsome fellow, and I pity the lady more than blame her who comes into his clutches." Possibly Guy believed all this. Doubtless, however, he said it in full view of the effect it might produce. He was determined to carry his point.

"Is he rich?" Osgood asked, with apparent indifference.

"That I can't say," replied his friend. "He is supposed to come from England, and has a trunk full of letters from high-toned Englishmen to various gold-headed canes in America; and of one thing I am very sure, he knows where investments in society's legal tender will pay him the best dividends. Apparently he is a man of leisure, seeking recreation and amusement upon this benighted side of the ocean."

"He freezes me to a block of ice," said Osgood, rather more moderately than the sentiment rendered appropriate.

"But he has a wonderful polish, an artistic dignity, and a remarkable harmony about him, which I suppose he puts on like his dress-coat, when he expects to be looked at, that melt society quite as easily and effectively."

Day by day it became more evident to Osgood Carleton that this man was intent upon marrying Carrie Ashley. It set him thinking more seriously. If every one thought that she loved him instead, and if he loved her, why should he stand by and see this man win the day? A woman worth having was worth working for, in spite of all that Guy said about waiting. Thereupon he indignantly discarded Guy's advice, and, without waiting to ask himself a second time if he were really at all sure that he loved her, and if it were probable that she really loved him in return, he determined to settle the matter at once. In reality he thought of it much as if it were a business transaction, quite like entering the medical school. It was a matter of uncertainty, till he had made application. He disliked uncertainties.

The resolve once taken, he did not wait for time and philosophy to weaken his position, but presented himself at once at Miss Ashley's door.

His hand trembled as he touched the bell-knob. He drew it back angrily, and holding it between his eyes and a street lamp, he looked at it scornfully. "Osgood Carleton, what are you made of?" he muttered. Then he turned and rang the bell calmly. It was excitement, not sentiment, that disturbed him. But why should he distinguish between them?

Fate could not have prepared a more propitious evening. Carrie Ashley was alone, and, smiling, said she was glad that he had come.

It was too late then to look at himself, outlined against the light of a street lamp, and ask what he was made of. All his life long he had been burdened with the over-abundance of words. He could never understand the wisdom of having so many in the language. Just now he would have given anything for a few of those which he had so often and so ruthlessly discarded. But they were all gone.

"Miss Cosgrove," he stammered, "I—I—I mean Miss Ashley."

She smiled as though she understood his embarrassment. Possibly she had seen others in that same position. She assisted him, unwittingly, perhaps, but dangerously, when still smiling she asked, "Well, what will you have of Miss Ashley?" for the words were scarcely spoken when he replied, —

"I would have her marry me."

Instantly he wished he had not said it. He dared not look in her face; but the silence that followed bore to him the frightful suggestion that he had been dreaming, deluded by his friend, fooled by his own fancy, and that this superb ideal of all that was beautiful had never thought of loving him. His cheeks burned with shame.

Now he looked anxiously in her face. What could he read there? Surely nothing of hope, yet she was not angry. There were tears in her eyes. She was struggling to keep them back. She was shrinking away from him.

"Miss Ashley," he exclaimed, "have I done wrong? You do not know how much you are to me, or you would not blame me."

"I do not blame you," she said, with a half-stifled sob. "And yet, I thought — I thought you were — come, sit down beside me, Mr. Carleton, and we will speak calmly. I do not think you are yourself to-night. You do not know me. You have only seen me at my best, and for a few weeks at most. You think me rich. People say I am handsome. That is all you know about me. If I were poor, a country girl, for instance, you would not want to marry me."

She was drawing a delicate lace handkerchief through her fingers. The student grasped the tiny hand, though it crushed the handkerchief.

"Carrie Ashley," he exclaimed earnestly, "I would you were a poor girl. Throw away your wealth. Tell me the report is false. Try me, and you will see that it is you I love, — you, Carrie Ashley!"

For a moment both were silent. Her hand trembled as it lay in his. The weight of a hair might have broken the false ice which was forming, but with a shudder she threw off the charm, and looking earnestly in his eyes, she asked in a low, almost pleading voice, "Did you never think that you loved before?"

He dropped her hand, and, moving restlessly, as though discovered in some sort of a crime, he replied, "Yes; I once thought that I loved"; and added, with more energy and less humility, "but you have shown me that I was mistaken."

For an instant he gathered courage. By some happy blunder he had surely put that well, and he began to think it might have turned the scales.

"Was she rich?" Carrie Ashley asked, returning his gaze, more sadly.

His eyes fell, and humbly enough he replied, "She was poor." He felt like a convict, yet even then he wondered why. Surely he had not left Kittie Cosgrove because she was poor. What could he say? Nothing. It was an unspeakable relief that another caller was announced, yet he was angry with himself that it should be a relief.

He reached his rooms like one walking in a dream. He paced them till the morning dawned, vainly endeavoring to fix his thoughts upon the significance of that hour.

His foot struck a hassock lying in his path. It maddened him. He kicked it furiously into the distant corner. "She must know that I have a fortune of my own!" he groaned, "and that I care not a straw for her cursed gold." Then he started and shuddered, as in his ears sounded the echo of that convicting confession, "she was poor," and that old indefinite vision of the little country girl rose from the shadows to challenge him. He groaned and turned away. What had one more than the other? Wealth! Wealth, that was all. And what did he care for wealth? Nothing! Absolutely nothing! And it all ended in his simply bitterly deploring that he had not followed the inclinations of his own will, and kept to the silent demands of his books, instead of follow-

ing Guy Underwood's advice to look humanity in the face.

With the return of daylight he was able to expel the grim phantoms, and at least assume the role of the preoccupied student of old ; and day after day a terrible week wore away. Then Guy Underwood appeared again, and, throwing his hat angrily on the floor, he exclaimed, "Good heavens, Carleton, what the devil is to pay?"

"I don't know," his friend replied, in the old, wondering way.

"Why, man!" the other ejaculated, "don't you know that Sir Edgar Stanley has cut you out, and is going to marry Carrie Ashley? What under heaven have you been doing, all this time?"

"Nothing," said Osgood Carleton, staring vacantly.

Then he came to himself, and realized what he had done ; what he had escaped, perhaps. The moment the possibility was gone, he saw himself without a mask. He had made a mistake. Carrie Ashley had saved him. So it appeared to him now ; and in this light he wrote a letter — a penitent letter — to the little village near his home. In time it was returned to him from the village post-office. The grand mother, the aunt, and their charge were gone. He wondered where, and tried in vain to learn.

CHAPTER IV.

SIR EDGAR possessed himself of a magnificent mansion a few miles from the city (except for several mortgages, of which he made no mention in his report to Mrs. Ashley), and, as soon as repairs and improvements could be accomplished, making of it a home as thoroughly English as could be produced in America, he was to bear his bride in triumph to Stanley Hall.

The cruel war broke out in all its devastating force, but it did not delay the nuptials. No fairy in all the world of romance came to warn Miss Ashley of the fearful fall before her. Guy was quite right in an inference that she knew she was making a mistake; but even more than that, had she known the entirety of the mistake, had some kind angel disclosed the whole, one may possibly doubt if it had made any difference; for to have seen her one would have recognized, first of all, the indomitable will and courage for a heroine, were it called upon, and would have admitted, whatever the inexplicable might be in her actions, that there must be withal a method in her madness.

When the war-cry sounded, Osgood Carleton was one of the first in his graduating class to petition for

an early examination, that he might answer the call at once.

"You're a fool to go into the army," said Guy. "Think of Maime. A year ago you told me you should never marry, but would live with Maime. Wouldn't it be nobler now, to stand up under this little cut, and carry out that resolve for her sake instead of your own?"

"Why don't you marry Maime, Guy? It would be far better."

"To tell you the truth," said Guy, "I have been booked for just that ceremony for something over six months." Osgood turned upon him suddenly, just as his father had turned the morning he proposed to study medicine. "You'll find me rather tough if you're going to eat me," Guy added, with a forced smile, for he was not thoroughly satisfied with this doubtful reception of the news. "It's your own fault; you invited me to spend last vacation with you; you told me then to marry her, and you did not think me such a fool as not to do my best to follow the advice of such a prodigy of wisdom as you have always proved yourself."

"Guy, I wish you would get over that. I was too glad to say so. That is all. Believe me, I could not have found a better husband for my sister." Guy grasped the proffered hand. "I was afraid this war would take you to the South again. I did not dare to ask."

"No, Carleton. My blood, not my sentiment, is with the South."

"You can't test the sails till the wind blows."

"That's so, my friend," replied Underwood, sadly. "That's the lesson of life, and even you are learning it at last. But for the war, I'm not with the South, though God forbid that I should ever fight against her. I have a great trouble of my own, just now, though. I was rich two months ago. Now I am poor. Except four or five thousand dollars here in the city, I have absolutely nothing. When I found it out, I wrote to Maime. No one knew that we were engaged. I told her we must break it off, and never say a word of it to a living soul."

There were tears in Guy Underwood's eyes; but Osgood Carleton, more matter of fact, after all, replied, with blunt energy, "If you believed she'd do it, Guy, you're not fit to be her husband."

"Never mind what I believed," Guy replied, sharply. "She wouldn't do it. You'll say, 'Of course she wouldn't,' and that's just what troubles me. Why shouldn't she? I tell you, Carleton, that she should! Then if I pick up and make a man of myself, and she has not done better, why, it will be time enough to take me up again. But she should be free in the mean time, and I want you tell her so. Tell her I mean it! Tell her she must!"

"Hold on there, half a minute," Osgood interrupted, with a pleading gesture. "Guy, your tongue is worse than an eight-day clock, when you get yourself excited. You go ahead and finish your course, and then marry Maime. Thank your stars that she said yes, instead of no. And if ever she asks you if

you ever thought you loved before, tell her *no!* by all that's holy! Sit down, Guy, sit down; I beg your pardon. Look here, I've no idea how much money father has; he always seems to have enough. But if it don't hold out to take you in handsomely too, why, you can have my share. You can trust to that, so go ahead, and God bless you."

"But what in the world do you propose to do?" asked Guy, too much affected to laugh as heartily as was his wont, over his friend's eccentricities.

Osgood Carleton looked at him for a moment in that old, wondering way. He thought the matter over silently. Sure enough, what did he propose to do? Then he snapped his fingers and replied, "I am going into the army; that is quite sufficient for this month and next."

Into the army he went, and found it quite sufficient for more than one month and more than two.

Lady Carrie read, with more pride than pain, of many a daring adventure of Surgeon Carleton, for which from the first he received military distinctions; and yet, with a sigh, which argued ill for the mistake she was making, she often repeated, "He will be one of the stanchest and truest of men in time; God help him, and keep him from harm!"

Far out upon the battle-ground Osgood Carleton read of the marriage of Sir Edgar Stanley and Carrie Ashley. He too sighed, and said, "God bless her and keep her from harm!" But he realized that the memory was very different from that which still lingered about him in thoughts of the waif of the cemetery.

Whether for one or both or neither, he could not tell ; but into each battle as it came, he entered with a feeling that it were no ill if he should not live to see the end of it. It would obliterate the past, if nothing more.

Thus throwing off so much of the past as was possible, he plunged deeper and deeper into the life he was living. Self-abnegation makes the hero in every strife. Unwittingly he became a hero.

But alas for Lady Carrie, she had no such diversion. She had made a mistake. Her fears became certainties even before the wedding march had ceased to echo in her ears. She had expected it. She had seen the little cloud, like a man's hand, in the distance, from the very first ; but suddenly it enveloped her. Before she was ready to meet it she found herself in the midst of it. The elegance and gallantry of her husband vanished for a moment, even as he crossed his own threshold. In a sudden vexation he cursed one of the servants. She looked at him with astonishment. His lips curved in a scornful smile, and, bowing very low, he waved her into a magnificent drawing-room.

Guests followed her before she could understand the situation ; and, while she endeavored to entertain one circle, her husband, in another part of the house, was entertaining quite another.

Guy Underwood was among the guests with the Lady Carrie ; and, as he saw everything wherever he was, he also sought out the circle that surrounded Sir Edgar.

"Yes, yes," he observed to himself, "it is quite as I thought. This marriage was the goal for which he was training. Now that he has won the prize, he will no longer be so careful to make a dividing line between his two sets of friends. Already he is surrounded by gamblers and drunkards, right in his own home, and at his wedding feast. If Carrie Ashley does not smart, before long, for shipping Osgood Carleton, then I'm not Guy Underwood, that's all."

Three days went by before Sir Edgar met his wife. Then he was once more the same pale-faced, rosy-cheeked English nobleman whom she had met in the city six months before. She received him as though he were a stranger. How could it be otherwise? But Sir Edgar only smiled, and seated himself with easy grace in a great arm-chair before the fire, in his wife's private drawing-room, all decorated in warm and rosy pink.

"My lady will pardon me that I presumed to be merry in celebrating my fortunate marriage," he said, and watched her for a moment. His searching brown eyes never flinched before her reproachful gaze; but meeting no other response, he added, with a low laugh, "Or she will not, as it may happen to please her; it is quite the same to me."

"I did it knowingly," she said, calmly, "the punishment is just; I will bear it."

For a moment he was silent. Then smiling again, he said, "My lady, until the veil was drawn away, I supposed I had married a wife who would love me, and lend me a helping hand."

Strangely enough, the words stung Lady Carrie as a just rebuke. She answered more meekly, "I was wrong, Sir Edgar. I will do better in the future."

"I have no doubt of it," he replied, smiling scornfully. "But it is remarkably easy to say that one will do better by and by."

Again she looked up in surprise, but quietly answered, "I am ready to begin."

"That sounds more wifely," he replied, gently stroking his delicate mustache; "but, while words do well enough at the altar, actions speak louder afterward."

Her cheeks flushed angrily, but she replied, "I am waiting to know your will."

Calmly he returned her indignant gaze, till her eyes fell to the floor before him, and with a shudder she realized that he was the master. Then, in those same musical tones in which he had wooed her, he continued, "It is money which I stand most in need of at the present time."

She started. "I thought you were rich!" she exclaimed, involuntarily, and bitterly regretted it before the last syllable was spoken.

"I believe you," he replied, still smiling; "but was that the only thing you ever thought of me in which you have found yourself mistaken? Pray do not answer me. I know what you wish to say. But we will take no exception here. I am poor. In fact, I am penniless. I bought this house simply upon a bond, that so soon as I was married I would furnish thirty thousand dollars toward mortgages, which

amply covered everything, furniture and all. At noon to-morrow, unless the money is paid, we shall have to go home and live with your mother. Would you like to?"

"Yes," said Lady Carrie, faintly.

"Very well," he replied, gently, rising and bowing as gracefully as though taking his leave of a stranger. "We had better start by ten, to be out of the way at noon. Will that hour please you?"

"It does not please me to go at all!" she exclaimed angrily.

"I am quite ready to go with you or stay with you, as you like." He was still bowing and smiling.

"I will stay. You shall have the money to-day. I will drive to the city at once, and —"

"Pardon me; it would be better to see your lawyer here."

"As it pleases you," she answered, and turned away from him.

There was not the burden of a falling pin to break the silence, but when she looked about her again he was gone. The door was closed behind him.

CHAPTER V.

THE summer wore on into autumn, and the autumn wore away. To all appearance the Lady Carrie had adapted herself to her new position, and the classical Sir Edgar was as perfect in complexion, as innocent in expression, as refined in action, and as indifferent as ever to all the world.

Only to quiet for a moment the unutterable torments, Lady Carrie had allowed herself to be forced again into society, when, to her unutterable surprise, she found herself one of the most envied of women. Where only the youth had bowed before to her beauty or her wealth, she found their fathers and mothers — yes, and their grandmothers — kneeling now, in all the freedom and equality of America, because, forsooth, she was the wife of an English nobleman. Who would have believed her, had she lifted the veil from that skeleton, and betrayed the fact that except in society she never exchanged a word with the man upon whose arm she leaned with such an envied right, beyond a few times when he had sought her apartments to demand her gold?

When Christmas came, and Stanley Hall was hung with holly to honor the good old English custom, for the sake of the proprietor, Sir Edgar appeared again in the little pink drawing-room.

"I fancied," he said, "that as this was Christmas eve you might have a present for me; so I remained at home to receive it. I had a little money last Christmas night, and I spent it upon a present for you. Now I have not a cent, but instead a heavy burden of family expenses. It seems but just that you should take your turn."

Very gracefully he lit a cigar.

"You mean that you wish more money," said Lady Carrie, quietly.

"Between the leisure puffs of that vexingly fragrant cigar, he replied: "No, not exactly that; but such an arrangement as shall relieve me of the necessity of enduring the unbounded sarcasm which you pile upon me whenever I admit that it costs a considerable sum to support this establishment."

• "Sir Edgar —"

He interrupted her. A moment later she was thankful.

"I beg," said he, "that you will not let your tongue run wild with you on Christmas eve. The paltry hundred thousand which was made your dower was a song that vanished as quickly as yours has. You used to sing charmingly, by the way, before we were married. I remember the way you smiled upon me, and the song you sang to me last Christmas eve. You have changed since then. That lawyer of yours is a bestial outrage. He lords it here as though he owned the whole estate. I feel like damning his shadow every time I see it cross the threshold. You are determined to keep me poor, because you think

that then you have me in your power. That is a loving sentiment, is it not? Now I want you to set that lawyer adrift, and put your property in my hands. It will be a great saving of commissions."

Through it all that perpetual smile had not for a moment subsided. He was too languid to stop and think if it were always appropriate. He blew a little wreath, a perfect little wreath, from his cigar, and watched it as it crept away from him, growing fainter and fainter, curling over and over upon itself, till a passing breath made an oval of it, and then all became a soft cloud and disappeared. Once more his eyes turned toward his wife. He was waiting a reply. Her head was resting on her hand upon the marble mantel, and the fire-light gloated over the pale face in crimson tints, while it transformed the pink drawing-room to a deep and oppressive purple. Her hands trembled. Her heart throbbed as though in its rebellion it would burst its confines. She seemed powerless to move a limb, but the dark eyes flashed the fire of indignation which only a strong will prevented her lips from uttering. At last she lifted her head, and with a calmness which astonished even the man who sat smoking and smiling before her, she replied, "I cannot do it!"

"Then I will help you," he said gently.

The strong grasp of her will yielded at last, and, standing firmly upon her feet, she exclaimed, indignantly, "I *will* not do it!"

"Then I will make you," he said, with a smile.

"Sir Edgar," she spoke defiantly, now that

restraint no longer held her back, and he vainly endeavored to interrupt her, "more than the entire income of my estate you have had and used as you saw fit. It is ten times more than you can possibly spend upon this house. I am only a girl, and for fear of the sacred vows with which I swore to be your wife, but never for a moment in fear of *you*, I have yielded to many a demand, and am still ready to yield. But do not think that because I am only a girl, I am incapable of understanding you, and of withstanding, too, if the case require. I am ready to leave you as I came, and to support you through life as the price of my liberty. I am ready to live for you here, and serve you. But neither will satisfy you. At last you have reached the point to which you have been bending me; but you find it one step too far. I will not follow you."

Sir Edgar rolled his cigar completely over in his lips before he answered her, and then his answer was only a smile; a quiet, almost a gentle smile. "It will be more annoying," he thought, "than if I speak just now," and he was right.

Long after he was gone Lady Carrie stood at the window, looking out upon the broad, cold lawn, where the snow lay like a shroud, and the wind wailed a solemn dirge through the bare branches. At last she faintly murmured, "Till death us do part."

The words had hardly sounded when she turned suddenly from the window, pressed her hands over her eyes, looked long and earnestly into the glowing fire, as though reviewing there some new position,

and, with a gleam of victory and triumph in her eyes, exclaimed, "Till death us do part! Yes, yes! Till death us do part. Strange that I never thought of that before, but I will act upon it now. Yes, I act to-morrow, even though it be Christmas day. Yesterday I would have given it all to him, and let him place me in the street, naked and starving, if he chose. But now it is too late. I will not do it! He shall never see that gold. I am bound by no promise after death shall have parted us. Till then I will bear the punishment of my folly, and God help me I will not rebel; but when he has tortured me to death and set me free, then I will, — yes, I will be revenged!"

Sir Edgar devoted a week to comparative gentleness, in hope of melting the ice that had gathered between them in that last cold storm. Then he gave up the struggle with the grim comforter, "I shall not see her money while she lives, but there is one way left me yet. I must have it and I will."

Sir Edgar Stanley never appeared again in the little pink parlor. His field now lay in another quarter.

CHAPTER VI.

L ENTEN season passed by. It was but natural that one so strict as the wife of an English nobleman must be should not be seen mingling in festivities. No one remarked as strange the fact that the face of Lady Carrie was not present in the parlor, on the drive, or at the opera. Her mother had gone abroad, and, living so far from the city, it was but natural that few should seek her out during the disagreeable spring weather. The few who did call were told by the servant that the Lady Carrie was ill, and asked to be excused. Spring came and went in all its misery and beauty, and the summer approached; but having once been missed without exclamation, it was not so openly remarked as it might have been, that the wife of Sir Edgar was still absent from society. One by one the friends whose circumstances allowed had called without seeing her, and their cards remained in the great bronze receiver in the hall until Sir Edgar saw fit to lessen the collection by throwing a handful into the fire. But the calls were never acknowledged. Some thought it appropriate to be offended at the slight, others offered excuses to themselves, and she was allowed to rest in peace, almost if not quite forgotten by the great majority.

And again the cold winds of November were sighing about the angles of the Stanley mansion, and the tall trees and the lovely shrubs that bore the warmer touch of summer-time so gracefully were trembling before the ruder hand of the North. Their garnish of green lay in a dry, brown drabble about their feet. Naked and knotty and gnarled, with nothing to cover their deformities, they swayed this way and that before the whim of the whirling wind. There were but two servants of the Stanley mansion who ever saw the mistress. The others only knew that she was ill. No physician came to investigate the malady and experiment upon it; for it was a peculiar case, which medical science had not yet touched upon. She had no pain for which their drugs were a panacea. There was nothing the surgeon's knife could have removed, that would have relieved the suffering.

She sought in vain for some explanation from the rude man and ruder woman who were constantly near her in the capacity of servants. They may have been nurses from some hospital. She had never seen them till she came to consciousness from a sudden fever which followed close upon Christmas day. More than once she demanded that they summon her husband; but they always replied that he was away from home. She applied every resource to discover some means of communication with the outside world; but every endeavor was frustrated, whether she knew it or not, by the watchful eyes of the strangers. In her own home, guarded by servants who were bribed and

paid from her own open purse, she was a prisoner beyond the power of pleading for pardon, beyond the possibility of rendering a ransom.

Too weak to struggle, too ill and indifferent to resent the wrong when she fully realized its magnitude, too helpless to defy the arm that held her after she had once felt its power, she sank into the chains as one, when sinking in the brigand sea, throws up his arms, and yields the struggle even before the waves have covered him. She surrendered to the tide, that it might bear her so much the more easily, lacking resistance, almost hopefully waiting for the end, with that refrain of freedom on her lips, "Till death us do part."

She found one very firm friend, however, to share her bondage. It was a huge St. Bernard dog. He was also a stranger, and but another guard, no doubt; but the dumb beast could not be bought with gold or bribed with promises. He eagerly accepted the friendship which she offered him, and day and night was by her side. Sometimes a vague thought of attempting to escape entered her mind; but the thin, white hands lay helplessly in her lap. The sunken cheeks, reflected in the mirror, asked, "For what would you escape? Death is on the way, coming as friend. The chains will be broken by a stronger hand than that which holds them. The ransom will soon be paid in a coin that must at once be satisfactory and complete." And with a sigh she would turn again to the task of waiting.

At times, when the will became weary with its long

and incessant watching, and nature rose in defiance, she would exclaim, "Sir Edgar's torture is driving me mad!" She even wondered if she were not already mad. But reason came again, and asserted that the surest way to accomplish precisely that object would be to perplex herself with thoughts like this.

Thus this strange, unearthly waiting brought Christmas eve again. The old woman spoke of it by accident, or it might have passed like every other eve, and the morning dawned like every other morning, notwithstanding it was Christmas day; for the sad, unreal shadow had nearly reached the threshold that would usher her beyond the confines of days and seasons, and she took but little interest in the turns of time. Just why she was dying she did not know; she had simply taken it for granted. She had believed her mirror, believed her senses, believed her own desire to die, and daily and hourly grown weaker and fainter.

During her unconsciousness she had been removed to an old wing of the house, farthest from the street and the main building, and most hidden among the naked branches. She cared but little. Indeed, she had hardly left her bed for several weeks.

The old woman stayed longer than usual in the room this Christmas eve. Almost tenderly she arranged the clothes and smoothed the pillow. With that startling perception of one nearing eternity, Lady Carrie looked up and asked, "Do you think I shall die to-night?" She smiled faintly. But the old woman

shuddered, turned abruptly from the bed, and stood by the window.

The winter wind wailed fearfully. She shrank from it, and, returning to the bed, she asked in a coarse, husky voice, "Do ye reely want ter die?"

"I am quite ready," replied the pale lips, without a tremor.

"Wouldn't ye rather live?" asked the woman.

Lady Carrie answered, "No."

The man's rude voice sounded at the door. With an oath he ordered the woman to come out.

"I don't blame ye, miss," muttered the woman, bending low over the pillow, — so low that the shadow beneath the coverlid trembled and shrank away. "I'm beyond a helpin' ye, yer beyond a wantin' help. Yes, girl, ye'll die the night. Make ready, make ready. The angels'll come fur ye in a chariot of fire." She shuddered again. "Oh, miss, had I 'a' had my senses earlier, all hell'd not 'a' drove me to it. But sure's this heart o' mine beats a day longer, there'll somebody smart for it. Mark that, miss, and die easy."

Again a fearful oath sounded, and this time the door was held open. The woman was gone, and only a faint memory of her strange words remained.

"So I shall die to-night," repeated Lady Carrie in a faint whisper, and the huge St. Bernard, standing by the bed, whined piteously and moved uneasily from side to side.

The door opened again. Some one whistled for the dog. A pang of regret made the faint heart ache.

But the dog was more wilful than the woman. His answer was only a long, low growl.

"Come here!" shouted the hoarse voice.

The dog looked at the bed. The white hand moved to call him nearer. He obeyed.

The man entered the room. He was the sum of all that is basest and most brutish in this world. Whenever he appeared the frail sufferer trembled. He approached the dog cautiously, for the animal lay ominously silent, and with no intent to move. He struck his cane upon the floor, and repeated his command. There was no response. He struck the dog, and suddenly found his cane held fast in the creature's powerful jaws. He left it there, and went out. Soon the woman returned with a piece of meat, laid it before him, and silently retreated. The door was closed and locked. As the key turned, the prisoner distinctly heard the same hoarse voice say to some one without, "The poison will quiet him," and the rest was lost. But the dog dropped the cane, turned his back upon the treacherous offering, and lay in the moonlight, looking up at his mistress.

A strange shudder crept over her. She spoke softly to the dumb animal. "'Tis poisoned," she said, "because you have befriended me. They know, poor fellow, that I shall die to-night. But you will watch with me."

Did he understand? He moved uneasily, and breathed in a low, half-smothered whine. He put his forepaws gently upon the bed, and licked the white hand that lay exposed. It was too weak to

caress him ; but he seemed to realize the fact, and only fondled it the more tenderly.

An hour went by, but it moved slowly, burdened and clogged in its way with strange wonderings. There was something evil in the air. Was it only because she was to die that night? A distant bell tolled slowly and hoarsely. It was eleven o'clock. She had never heard that bell before, yet the wind, as it howled about the window, would almost have drowned the voice of one standing beside it. Restlessly the dog paced up and down the room ; nervously he stopped each time he passed the window to rest his paws upon the sill and look out. Then he would utter a low, faint cry and return to the bed again. Lady Carrie closed her eyes, but sleep seemed far from her. She wondered why ; and, to still the strange feelings creeping over her, she whispered, "I am only to die to-night, and it is till death us do part, and no longer. The fault was more mine than his in the beginning, and for all since then I forgive him with all my heart." And still some horrible mystery seemed breathing about her. In vain she closed her eyes to sleep, — to die. Shudder after shudder followed the blood as it trembled from her heart.

The dog stood with his forepaws upon the bed, looking into her eyes as though he knew that she would die that night. She felt his warm breath upon her cheek ; it seemed to grow warmer and warmer, till suddenly she realized that she instead was growing colder. She tried to draw the blankets closer

about her, but they were too heavy. She could not move them. Suddenly then it came to her that she was dying. The hand fell upon the coverlid. No more exertion was necessary. She breathed a deep sigh of relief. She turned with an effort, and laid her thin hand upon the furry head bending over her. Just that poor life had braved the wrath of her tormentors to see her and pity her, and be with her when she died.

"God bless you," she whispered. Gently he touched her cheek with the tip of his tongue, as though he understood the prayer, and were grateful for it, regardless of the theology which exorcised him from the blessings of the great Being who had given him a heart, even though he had clothed it in a coat of fur. Surely if he knew that she were dying he must have known, too, that he was only a dog; but with almost a human moan he laid his head upon the pillow.

Slowly but surely it became evident to the sufferer that her heart was beating more faintly, hesitating, ever and again, as though it were almost unnecessary to make the struggle. She tried to speak, but her tongue failed to obey. It had already lost its power. She looked into the gentle eyes of the great St. Bernard. They were fixed upon her in inexpressible pity. Yet as she looked they seemed sinking farther and farther away from her. Another sense was failing. She realized it without a pang. Soft music sounded in her ears. Figures, all clothed in white, were gathering about her. Faces of the lost, the unforget-

ten, were smiling upon her as she sank to rest. She could almost hear the rustle of their garments, almost touch their outstretched hands.

"Mother! mother!" came in faint breath, more a deep thought than spoken word, as a long-lost face bent nearer than the rest. And while her limbs grew cold in death, an ethereal summer was thawing the icy chill. Dying was not so hard as she had thought. Dying! It was ecstasy! Dying was heaven, and heaven was fairer as she looked into the pearly gates from such a lonely and forsaken pillow. The white-robed friends were dearer because there was no earthly tie to sever. The welcome would be unmarred by a farewell. And that peace of God, which passeth all understanding, seemed so real and near to her that in it the ills of life and the terrors of death were alike nothing.

Slowly and painfully the distant clock tolled the spirit's hour.

Lady Carrie heard every stroke, and even from the gate she turned to remember that it was Christmas day; but she no longer mourned or wondered over the mystery and misery of the past.

Was it only the tolling of the bell which startled the St. Bernard? With a low growl, very unlike his previous whining, he turned from the bed. Lady Carrie would fain have called him back, for she feared she might die before he returned. But the dog was too eager upon something else to notice the feeble movement of her hand. He growled again, sniffed wildly in the air, sprang to the window, then

turning again leaped upon the bed. His weight might easily have crushed her, but a gentleness unexplicable guided his feet with almost superhuman care. Eagerly he threw off the covering, and, with the night-dress in his teeth, he drew the frail figure gently to the very edge of the bed. There he left her, and, calling with a voice that was almost human, he walked slowly backward toward the window. A strange and pungent odor penetrated her bewildered senses. A red glow tinged the white moonlight in the room, and then overcame it. A column of brilliant smoke rose before the window.

Like one waking from a deep sleep, Lady Carrie lay and watched these strange incidents, at first as though they had no part whatever for her, but were only an interval, something to amuse her on the way. She would have turned and left them, for the other dreams were more delightful; but the dog came again, and, catching her dress, roused her once more.

Suddenly the words of the old nurse came back to her, "The angels will come for you in a chariot of fire."

In an instant all the failing senses were summoned back again. She realized it all. She had been placed in that lonely wing to be burned to death. Apparently, at that last moment, a flame of earthly will fired the heart which had borne all before, and almost ceased its beating at the command of her master. Was it a supernatural strength which thrilled each nerve, or was it only a strange and ill-understood mastery of the will? She rose from the bed, and tottered toward the window.

"Could he not have waited one hour more for me to die?" she asked herself, wonderingly. "Am I to be murdered? Help! Help! Will no one save me?" The St. Bernard howled as the flames rose higher before the window.

"I will not die like this," she moaned, and shrank away from the heat already penetrating the glass. "I have knelt for him to kill me; I have lain at his feet without a murmur, but I will not die like this. Mother! Mother! Have you gone from me now, when I need you most?" She turned again to the window. It was bolted down, and was already heated by the fire. Desperately she tried the door. It would not yield.

"Mercy! Mercy!" she shrieked, dragging upon the knob. "Tell him I will do it. Tell him I will do it!" She turned suddenly from the door, and clutching her hair in both hands, as it fell in heavy masses over her shoulders, she cried, "What am I saying? What? I would do it? No! Never! Never! Never! I will not do it."

With a wild shriek she staggered back, as the glass of the window burst with the heat, and a quivering tongue of fire shot through the aperture.

The St. Bernard stood silently beside her now. He neither moved nor cringed as the flames swept in. They caught the curtains, they danced upon the heated sill, they flashed along the floor, they rollicked in the bed drapery. It was scarcely a moment before the room was a mass of flame.

"Heaven help!" the prisoner gasped. "I will not

die like this ! I — I — I — will — I — no, no — will not — ” The flames had caught her breath, their grasp had strangled her. She fell helplessly forward, and, true to the last, though his furry coat was singed with fire, the motionless St. Bernard broke the fall, and the frail form of the emaciated sufferer lay unconsciously across his powerful shoulders, her hands clutching desperately in the long hair on his throat.

CHAPTER VII.

THE old wing of the Stanley mansion was utterly destroyed by fire that Christmas morning. The master of the house was miles away at the time, and people said, "How sad, how very sad, that the lovely Lady Carrie should have chosen that quarter of the house, and thus have perished in the flames!"

At the last ceremonials Sir Edgar paid such elaborate tribute to his wife, and was himself so terribly afflicted, that many a true heart wondered how it was compatible with the goodness of God to sever so soon and so cruelly two hearts united in such tender love.

Guy Underwood attended the funeral, though upon no friendly terms with Sir Edgar. He listened as the clergyman, in soul-wringing eloquence, recorded the virtues of the dead. He heard the prayer, in which the rhetorical man of God informed his Maker what an acquisition he had just gained in the heavenly hosts. The sobbing was very loud about the room. Something impelled Guy to open his eyes. Inadvertently they rested upon Sir Edgar. From behind a black-bordered handkerchief Sir Edgar was watching him intently. His eyes fell instantly, but it was just that instant too late.

"Why was he looking at me in that way?" Guy

asked himself. "Surely it was not for sympathy; no, it was suspicion; it was fear; he is not mourning; he is trembling with fear; he was afraid that I suspected something, something about this funeral; now he is sure of it; I will not undeceive him; on the contrary, I will discover."

He was quite right. Sir Edgar had not been attentive to the sobs or the eloquence. He was thinking of the man and the woman whom he had paid with lavish hand to keep the blood-stains from his own delicate fingers. He was disturbed; for since the fire they had not appeared to claim the last reward.

"The woman is a tramp," he said to himself, as the sobbing was loudest. "She knows when to hold her tongue; but the man is a blockhead. I am not sure of him. I wonder if the woman would kill him too for another five thousand. He may get himself drunk some day, and tell it all," he shuddered. "He could not have told — I wonder why in the world that infernal Underwood is here to-day!" That was the moment when he glanced from behind his handkerchief, when their eyes met, when he hid his face again and shuddered, under the conviction that Guy Underwood did know or suspect more than was wise.

The clergyman said "Amen." The service ended, the coffin was laid in the grave, the snow fell over it in a spotless sheet, no footprints marred it, no tears disturbed it, and Lady Carrie was forgotten.

Why not? Sir Edgar had other things to think of after the funeral.

The first step which he took, so soon as was by any means compatible with his black-bordered sorrow, was to call upon the lawyers in order to place himself at once in possession of the coveted wealth. He was going away to England to stanch his bleeding heart in his own native land. That was excuse enough for haste.

The lawyer received him in a manner less subservient than the nobleman fancied. Hence he explained his errand in a fashion even more dictatorial than was his wont. The lawyer looked at him; half amused, half surprised, half suspicious, perhaps. Sir Edgar was a curious combination. He looked like a saint with a soul as white as his forehead, yet he looked like a sinner beyond anything but the repentance of the dying thief. His delicate fingers, with little dimples at the joints, might have been sailing a toy-boat upon a bubbling brook, or they might after all be grasping a serpent down among the slums. The lawyer looked him over carefully, listened to what he said, and then suggested that he engage an attorney to represent him. Sir Edgar's delicate lips curved gracefully about a fearful oath as he informed the lawyer that he did not come to him for advice.

"The law moves slowly, to prevent mistakes," replied the other.

"But I am in haste," said Sir Edgar. "Remember, you are not dealing now with a credulous woman. Your actions must be accounted for, and the results must correspond."

The lawyer turned from him sharply, and began to write.

Sir Edgar hesitated a moment, and then more calmly asked, "How soon do you propose to settle with me the estate of Lady Carrie?"

"When the will of the late Mrs. Stanley has passed I will send you word," the lawyer replied without looking up.

"The will?" he asked, in a wondering way.

"The will of the late Mrs. Stanley," replied the lawyer, quietly.

"She left no will!" exclaimed Sir Edgar.

"You are mistaken, sir."

Then Sir Edgar's rage broke all bounds. "If there is a will," he cried, "you made it! It is a forgery!"

"That does not follow," replied the lawyer, smiling, bowing, and opening the office door. "You have forgotten that in this State women have some individual and very appropriate rights in the disposal of their own property. With the exception of less than one hundred thousand dollars, Mrs. Stanley's property was all in real estate; and, though she was a credulous woman, she took what I begin to think was a very wise precaution, in so arranging her will that only what the law necessitates should fall to you. Good morning."

Sir Edgar's step was not so firm as he went down the stairs. His wife had outwitted him. His labor was lost. Her death had cost him a fortune.

Upon the street he met Guy Underwood. Guy had opened a little office, and was struggling to regain

what he had lost by the war, while his interest in problematic characters was as intense as ever, and Maime was impatiently waiting for him to be satisfied that he had proved to himself his power to be a man in spite of no money. Guy hailed Sir Edgar as he would have hailed an opportunity to have witnessed a novel operation at the hospital. Sir Edgar was in no mood for this meeting; but Guy was beside him, had even taken his arm, and he dared not shake him off.

"What a pity," said Guy, "that life cannot always be as bright as the sunshine to-day."

"Life is a fraud!" growled Sir Edgar.

"So it is; that is, we who live it are frauds."

Their eyes met for an instant, and each came to a conclusion.

"Life would not be a fraud," Guy continued, "if we were all as true as your wife, Sir Edgar."

Sir Edgar made no reply. Guy was not satisfied with the progress he was making, and to gain time to consider a new move he repeated a remark he had once made to Osgood Carleton, "I know of but one woman who is her equal."

"Who may she be?" asked Sir Edgar, eager to change the subject of their conversation.

"The lady to whom I hope to be married," Guy replied, carelessly. "By the way, you must have made fabulous sums yesterday and to-day, in the tremendous rise in gold stocks." He referred to the Lady Carrie's Californian mine interests.

Sir Edgar looked at him sharply an instant, and muttered, "Yes."

"I wonder how the unfortunate fire started," he ventured, a moment later.

"I don't know," Sir Edgar replied abruptly, and, turning down a side street so unexpectedly that even Guy was not quick enough to prevent it, he walked away alone.

"If you did not know you would find out," Guy muttered, standing there and looking after him. As Sir Edgar turned the distant corner he looked back, and again their eyes met. The distance between them made but little difference. Each again drew his own conclusions.

Sir Edgar's in the first place decided him to leave the will unmolested. It might be dangerous to rake those embers in a court of law. It was fear of Guy Underwood that forced him to this conclusion. His second was that Guy Underwood should suffer for it. He fell to thinking of what Guy had said about the only one who stood nearer his ideal than the Lady Carrie. He had seen the young doctor with a pretty blonde, whom he knew to be the daughter of his friend, Amos Carleton, and thereupon he began to form a plot.

And Guy? He was far away, bending anxiously over a little child suffering the tortures of fever. It was only a charity patient, but that did not signify. Thanks from such people were better than gold to him. He had entirely forgotten Sir Edgar.

CHAPTER VIII.

OUT upon the battle-field Osgood Carleton was still the hero of self-abnegation, and time moved swiftly that had else lain heavily on his hands.

"Men are strange creatures," he often said to himself. "No wonder Guy loved to study them. I could almost believe with Matthew Arnold, they are such wonderful beings."

The soldiers were gathering about the camp-fires for the night, as he wandered slowly down the long line. Many of the men were already stretched at length upon the ground. Some were sitting by the fires, writing last letters home, before the battle — possibly for all eternity. Those who were still awake rose to salute him as he passed, for not a soldier in the ranks but found a warm heart-throb for the self-sacrificing man.

A man sat almost alone by a smouldering fire. A late paper lay upon his knee. He had finished reading, and was about to roll his blanket around him for the night. Dr. Carleton sat down beside him, and borrowed his paper. The soldier went to sleep the happier for having done even so slight a favor to the Brigade Surgeon Carleton.

It was from the great city where he had studied

medicine. He read the city news carelessly, and turned the paper. The firelight flickered with fearful distinctness over the great black headings of the second column, containing a painfully explicit account of the death of the wife of Sir Edgar Stanley. The blow was sudden. The sentry was asleep. Osgood Carleton groaned.

"Is Carrie Ashley gone?" he repeated, in that old wondering way. What a blank it seemed to leave in life to know that she was gone. Then suddenly he turned upon himself, as who should say, "I thought it was Kittie Cosgrove, and now?" It was inexplicable. He did not even try to solve it. All that was left him of either was the lesson he had learned that there was something deeper in love than the passing fancy of the hour, just as there is more to the brook than the ripple on the surface; but what it was he did not know, and had little expectation that he should ever discover.

As the eastern horizon grew gray again, and the ideal phantoms faded before the facts of daylight, the army rose with that deep, muffled rumble, and in the uncertain light Dr. Carleton laughed a scornful, bitter laugh, such as one is only capable of laughing when he realizes fully what a fool he can make of himself, and from the sleepless vigil he turned for another day. Once more he was only what men saw at the moment. The only change of the night was that he was more firmly than ever resolved to be just that forevermore — a man in the abstract — like a fleck of dust floating about the room, up and down at

the will of a shadow, ignorant, but only apparently independent of the great law of gravitation.

And in all his philosophy there was no warning hand to point out the fact that this was even a more absurd and foolish step than any he had taken before.

Thus for six months more he moved about his little world; not in it. Men, great men, saw, admired, and praised his skill and bravery. He stood upon the threshold of the highest position which could be conferred upon a surgeon in the United States Army. What did he care for it? Nothing.

Women, beautiful women, often frequenting headquarters, saw, admired, and praised. What did he care for it? Nothing.

So fearlessly did that stern face appear, wherever there were men to die or be kept from death, that among the superstitious there were some who positively believed that Dr. Carleton was possessed of a charmed life. But there came a time when this superstition was disproved. The bullet moulded for him went upon its way at last. His almost lifeless body was carried to the hospital tent, and thence, a few weeks later, to Baltimore, where he could receive more skilful treatment.

When he opened his eyes to realize his surroundings, it was with pettish disgust that he looked through the open door of his private room to find the long corridors beyond swimming before his eyes, a vague line of women; nurses moving here and there among the cots. He shut his eyes and turned his

head away when the nurse to whose care he was intrusted entered the little room. She asked him a question, in a voice that was soft and musical and low. He did not even listen to what she said; he simply shook his head, and wished she would go away again.

She gently moved his pillow, bathed his forehead, smoothed the coverlid, and gave him a bit of good news from the front.

When she had gone away he opened his eyes again, and wondered what she had looked like. There were two nurses standing at a little distance. It must have been one of them. "If it was that one with a blue ribbon in her hair, then the sooner I die the better," he muttered with a sigh. "The other with black hair and a red ribbon will do better. She's a ghastly thin, white creature. I'd as soon have a ghost for a nurse. I think I shall like her. She is a peculiar creature. She might be twenty or she might be fifty. Why doesn't she look this way? Heavens! What horrible great things her eyes are, ugh! I hope she'll not come near to me again." This little line of fretful speculation thoroughly overcame him, and he fell asleep, wishing she would come and bathe his forehead once more.

A disagreeable dream was running away with him.

"Are you waking, doctor?"

He opened his eyes. It was the black-haired nurse, with the red ribbon and the great eyes and ghastly face. No wonder his dreams were rude. He shut his eyes instantly. "It was only a dream," he muttered, and turned as far away as possible.

"It is time for your medicine," she said, in a voice that had music enough in it to have soothed a savage. But the patient only moved his hand pettishly, and murmured, —

"Oh, go away with your medicine ! My life is not worth saving."

"Oh, this medicine is not to save your life, doctor ! You are not going to die. They say there is not the slightest danger. This is only to make you a little better natured," she replied.

He knew she was laughing at him. But all was so very still afterward that he felt sure she had gone away. He was almost sorry. He opened his eyes. She was still there with the bottle and spoon. He was angry.

"Are you never going away ?" he asked.

"Not till you have taken this medicine," she replied as gently as before.

"Then give it to me quickly," he muttered, and shut his eyes and opened his mouth. He heard her replace the cork in the bottle, and knew she was making a note of the time on the slip of paper beneath it, and another on the tablet hanging at her waist. It was the old routine of the ward. He had seen it through a thousand times while he had stood over the patients. That done, she would of course turn away.

"My head aches," he muttered, without opening his eyes.

She took the gentle hint at once, and while she bathed his forehead he fell asleep again.

"She looks like a ghost, but she acts like an angel," he observed one day, when he had crept a little farther away from the grave, and could look at matters with a little more common-sense.

The relief nurse was a horror to him. He had not been at all delicate in saying just that, after his first night of consciousness, when he had lain and quietly longed to die to be out of her way. Now that he observed a little more of his surroundings he realized that since then she had never been near his bed, except when she came as assistant. Call when he would, day or night, the dark hair and the red ribbon always appeared. The next time she came he asked her when she went off duty.

"Never, while there is duty to be done," she replied, smiling, "but unfortunately I am not very strong. They tell me I shall not be here much longer. I shall find you a new nurse pretty soon."

"No, no! I'd rather die!" Dr. Carleton exclaimed, raising himself with difficulty upon his elbow.

"You will change your mind when I tell you," she replied. "Your sister wrote to the hospital a week ago that she was coming to Baltimore. She said that she would be here to-day or to-morrow."

"What is the matter with you?" Dr. Carleton asked, looking anxiously into her face for almost the first time, and wondering that he had never before noticed how haggard and thin and white it was.

"Nothing, only a little overwork."

He shook his head doubtfully. "If I were you I would leave the hospital within an hour. Where do you live?"

She hesitated. "I have no home. I am one of those convenient beings made expressly for nurses."

"Then you should go at once to Philadelphia, to the — hospital. You're — No, no, I don't know what is the matter with you, but I think — I am sure you cannot go too soon. I've been blind not to see it before. A friend of mine is at the head of the hospital, and I know it to be the best place in America for — for — why, yes, of course, for you or any one else who needs to be taken care of. What is your name? Write it down on that paper for me, and when I am sitting up this afternoon I will dictate a letter to him."

"My name is Kate Ashley. It is so simple that you can remember it without writing," she replied, and replacing the tablet, arranged the bottles and prepared to go away. Possibly the professional eye of the nurse detected that the pale face was even whiter than before, if that were possible; for she turned again, adding in the same gentle voice, "I have wearied you with my talking. I should have known better. Now I will bathe your forehead to atone for it, and you must forget all that we have talked about."

"And you will go to that hospital?"

"Yes, I will go so soon as your sister comes."

Dr. Carleton looked up suddenly. "What has that to do with you? Go to-day, if you value your life. Go, whether you do or not. Save it for the good it has done to others."

"But what will you do in the mean time? You

are so cross that most of the nurses would be afraid to come so far as the door," she replied, attempting to smile.

"I will behave myself. But you must go, cross or no cross."

"I will go," she replied, in a hope of quieting the patient, whose excitement was reaching a dangerous point; and a moment later she was gently bathing the forehead, while he lay with his eyes closed, apparently sleeping.

He opened his eyes again. "Kate Ashley, did you say?"

"I thought you were sleeping. Yes, Kate Ashley is my name. You must not talk," replied the nurse.

"No, I will not. I knew some one of that name once."

The nurse did not reply at once, but seeing that there was no probability of sleep she said, a little later, "I suspect, from the city where you studied medicine, that it might have been the wife of Sir Edgar Stanley whom you knew."

"No, it was not!" he exclaimed, fiercely, "it was Miss Carrie Ashley whom I knew."

"We were distant relatives," replied the nurse. "Poor girl! I was taught to think her very fortunate; but I have a sort of a feeling in my heart that wealth does not do everything in the world for one, after all."

Dr. Carleton made no reply. He slept at last, and when he woke Maime was beside him. He thought of the letter he was to write, but there was no necessity. The nurse was already a patient in

the Baltimore hospital, too ill to be removed. He understood it now, how she had held her life for nothing, that she might save his. It imparted an ambition, the utter lack of which had held him from recovery so long.

Maime, when she understood the whole, willingly bestowed her time upon the self-sacrificing woman who had saved her brother's life. While Dr. Carleton not only devoted every energy to recovery, but every thought which his skill could suggest to the unfortunate patient, who would doubtless otherwise have been utterly forgotten in the rush and crowd of a great hospital, filled from the ghastly tortures of the battle-field.

As the result of all good circumstances combined, it was but four weeks later when Maime had her two invalids safely quartered at Carleton Cottage. There her brother rapidly gathered strength again, but in the case of the nurse the last link had almost broken. The frail shadow shivered upon the threshold, turned, almost reluctantly, and slowly came into the world again.

CHAPTER IX.

OVER this shadow Osgood Carleton fought only for a life at first. It was the deepest debt he could have owed to mortal that he was paying in that struggle. But in time he realized that an oppressive eagerness was endangering his professional skill. It was the battle-cry for a fiercer struggle within, a struggle such as few men can realize who have not once been bitterly vanquished. The thought of loving, of dreaming that he loved again, was burdened with unutterable horror. He would have said that it was even an impossibility. Yet, as that strange, indefinable feeling crept deeper and deeper into his life, he literally stood aghast before it, and acknowledged that, notwithstanding all through which he had passed, the same old impulse was not impossible. His first incentive was to fly from it. He remembered Kate Ashley's reply, "Always on duty when there is duty to be done." No, he would not go away.

Day after day he watched her slowly gathering strength again. He saw the ghastly pallor leaving her face, the sunken, haggard look gone from her cheeks, and a cold, stern beauty creeping into those great, dark eyes. He could scarcely believe himself that this was the strange nurse who had bent so tenderly over his pillow.

"That was her nature ; this is something false," he said to himself. "She looked like a ghost then and acted like an angel ; now she is beautiful as an angel, but she — she — why does she act in this way, as though perpetually trying to hold me at arm's length ? Is she afraid that I will feel in duty bound to love her because she saved my life ? Why should I love her ?"

Again he struggled with his will to conquer that sentiment which is master of the will. Day after day, however, the coils became stronger and stronger. Life would not seem the blank it had before. In spite of himself, in spite of every possible assistance afforded by the lady, in spite of everything, it grew into him continually that life was worth living, if there were such a woman in it for whom one could live.

But the deeper the conviction became, the more fiercely did Osgood Carleton denounce himself. "Whirl about like a butterfly !" he would exclaim ; "cling to one pretty flower till you are blown away, then make for another. No, no ! God forbid that I should ever love again ! Why will it so persistently cling to me that this woman could fill the past and the future of my life with joy ? She does not love me. Great heavens ! were I to speak of love to her, she would spurn me instantly. I know it positively. Will not that help me to resist ?"

It was night. He was sitting alone in his room. He had entirely recovered from his wound. Kate Ashley had recovered. There was nothing to keep

him longer from returning to the army. It was the thought of going back that had aroused the bitter confession in the secret of his own room, and that held him there, hour after hour, through the long night, pondering, simply pondering.

Maime, with a heart full of thoughts of her lover, had long been sleeping soundly. But Kate Ashley, the silent and cold-hearted, lay sleeplessly upon her bed in the next room.

It was one of those nights in early June when the heat is oppressive and the windows opened wide, but when the novelty magnifies the noises of the night, which a little later pass unheeded.

Voices sounded through the open window, faintly at first, but growing gradually louder. Unwittingly Kate Ashley listened to the tones as to some distant, soothing music. Two men were conversing upon the veranda below. One of them was Amos Carleton, the same prodigy of business as of old. It was a relief from the thoughts she had been thinking to lie there quietly and listen to the voices. She had no idea of what they were saying. There is a curious charm in such intonations on a summer night; and the innocent disturber of Osgood Carleton's slumbers was being gradually lulled to sleep, when a little word, spoken louder than before, suddenly roused every drowsy faculty. Trembling with eager haste, but silently as a shadow, she crept to the window. Eavesdropping?

Yes, this nurse from the hospital had suddenly become an eavesdropper.

The picturesque grounds about the cottage lay like a dark island floating in the white moonlight before her. It was nature's first glorious rush into life and summer time.

The words from below came clearly and distinctly. "I tell you, Carleton, I mean to carry this thing through." The figure in the window shuddered.

"Stanley, I'm a knave, and I know it!" said the deeper voice. "But I love my daughter as truly as though I were as pure as she; more, because I have fallen so low myself, and if I have the power to prevent it, I will not see her young life thrown away."

A cold, clear, metallic laugh sounded from the throat of the other. Then he replied deliberately, "You're rather blunt. But the pot can't call the kettle black, as your aristocrats say, here in America. As if a girl would be throwing herself away to leave you as a father to be the wife of an English nobleman!"

"None of your confounded impudence, Stanley!" exclaimed the other excitedly. "I tell you it won't go down to-night. I'm in no mood to be driven. Curse it all! I've been driven long enough. I'll go by myself in this, if it be go to the devil to pay for it. We're both of us legal criminals; but my faults as a father are not to be compared with yours as a husband, and you know it!"

"Damn your quibbles," said the stronger voice calmly. "You would be wasting your wind to try and prove the criminal on me. I am an English nobleman. But you! Good heavens! Where would

your daughter stand if I should tell one half of what I know of you? Your wisest course, if you value her happiness, look for her respect, or hope to earn your own bread outside of State prison, is to come to the suggestion I made six months ago, and see that the girl marries me. I have given you six months, and now I mean to have it done, with you or without you. Do you see?"

The voices grew fainter, and the listener in the window crept far out upon the veranda roof, supporting herself by the trellis that would soon be covered with trailing vines and lovely flowers which passers-by would linger to admire. She was even leaning over the frail guard, looking down into the faces of the two, who were so busily engaged with lower things that neither of them ever thought of looking up even so high as the veranda roof. Not a word escaped her.

Amos Carleton spoke, almost in desperation. "Stanley!" said he, "what I have done I have done *for my children*. I know that I have committed crimes. But when my children were little ones, left motherless, I was a bankrupt. To save them I became a defaulter. To hide it I forged, and to cover that I lifted you out of the gutter, and made you a counterfeiter. Together we have done the rest. I have not spent the money on myself. My children did not ask for it. They would rather have been poor than have had me do it; but I could not bear the thought of making them beggars so long as the price of my own soul alone would keep them

rich. My ventures have brought success, and they have reaped the benefit. But God in heaven knows they will reproach me less, to-morrow, in prison than if I add this crime to cover up the rest."

"Put on a white necktie and go into the pulpit," said Edgar Stanley, scornfully.

Mr. Carleton did not heed him, but continued, "I tell you, Stanley, that she loves another man, and that if I gave my consent to this, and even commanded her, it would do no good. She would not leave him."

"I know better," said Sir Edgar, calmly.

"It is so! Indeed it is! He is an admirable fellow. He is doing an excellent thing in his profession, and is already celebrated. I think they are to be married soon."

"Never," Edgar Stanley spoke quietly.

"Never! What do you mean?" said Amos Carleton, his voice trembling.

"What I say. I shall marry her myself," replied the other.

"Not if she will marry Dr. Underwood!" said Mr. Carleton, fiercely.

Again the metallic laugh sounded and the calm voice replied, "Fool, Carleton! to think that she would rather hang on to such a man. But fool or no fool, she shall marry me or you shall suffer. There you have it."

Kate Ashley remained by the window long after the speakers had left the veranda, till a sigh from Maime, sleeping in the adjoining room, recalled her. She crept to Maime's bedside.

"It lies in my power to deliver you, poor girl," she whispered with a deep sigh. "Yes! if the worst comes — so help me God — I can do it and I will!"

The sleeper turned on her pillow, moaning in her sleep, and the woman bending over her caught the words, "Not yet, Guy, not yet."

It seemed almost prophetic. The woman turned away with a shudder, and entered her own room.

CHAPTER X.

AS the first tints of dawn touched the distant horizon, Kate Ashley crept noiselessly along the corridor of Carleton Cottage. A door stood open before her, and, through the crack, a faint light shone down the hall. As she approached she recognized the figure of Osgood Carleton, sitting by a low desk, his head bent over it, resting on his hands. He was sleeping.

A shiver shook the dark figure in the hall. She caught the balustrade to support herself. "Poor fellow!" she sighed. "He has been there all night. Now for a moment he has forgotten what life is. I would not call him back again, and yet I cannot go without seeing him."

Her hand trembled, but she rapped gently on the door. The sleep was not deep, for Dr. Carleton sprang instantly to his feet. He drew his hand nervously across his eyes as though he thought himself still dreaming, and stood for a moment like one struck dumb.

A sharp cringe of intense pain shot across the pale face in the door. Unable to move, Kate Ashley stood mutely struggling to break the spell.

With an effort Dr. Carleton roused himself, and, crossing the room, extended his hand. "Pardon me,"

he said, "I fell asleep at my desk. Has anything happened?"

"Not much," she replied, hardly touching his hand. "Only a foolish whim. But I have had a terrible dream. It haunts me so that I fear it is making me ill again. Forgive me, I dare not stay here another hour. Oh, forgive me, Dr. Carleton! I am only a woman, and women are foolish. I cannot explain more to you now. Think me foolish, think me mad, but let me go, and do not think that I have no heart for the kindness which you and your sister have showered upon me, because I am going so rudely."

"Where are you going?" he asked, bewildered, yet realizing beyond a doubt that she was in earnest and would go.

"To New York," she replied hastily. "I have a friend there whom I promised to visit. I must, yes, I must take the early train, and I wanted to ask you if you would drive me over. My trunk is all packed, but I do not need it. I will send for it by and by. Will you drive me? Then I can tell you of my dream."

It was the same soft, sweet voice which he had so often heard in the hospital, and which he had longed in vain to hear in Carleton Cottage.

Mechanically he took his hat from the chair where he had thrown it the night before, lit a taper, and led the way. The lady followed him to the stables, and, with hands which were no strangers to a horse, assisted, in silence, to harness one of those blooded

animals that bore such an important part in sustaining the name of Amos Carleton for the sake of his children.

A moment more and they were upon the road. The horse was madly glad of this sudden release from the stable, and the bright sparks flew into the gray morning from his well-shod hoofs.

They were rapidly approaching the city. Dr. Carleton looked at his watch. There was time to spare. The lady beside him had not spoken. He drew the rein. The horse's pace slackened a little.

Had not Providence thrown this vision of hope across his path, and should he deliberately let it go unheeded? He had not sought it. He had even shunned it. He thought of what Guy Underwood had said, and wished that he had time to find him and ask him again what love really was, and how he could know that "only one" for whom he could be everything, and who could be everything to him. He drew the reins again, and the horse walked leisurely along the road, quite willing to accept the change, now that his first enthusiasm had been fully gratified.

Still Kate Ashley did not speak. He looked at her. She was far away from him. It would only startle her to remind her of the present. Why should he speak for himself there? It would only be inviting a certain rebuke. He saw it as clearly as though the sun had written it in brilliant light along the gray morning sky. No, he would let the dream vanish as it came, — out of nothing, into

nothing, — leaving only a pain at the heart to respond when memory, that wanton god of vengeance, called upon it.

Yet even as he resolved, he drew the rein again, and the horse stood still.

His companion was so busy with her thoughts that she did not appear to notice even this. He leaned toward her. It was like raising a knife to stab himself. There was poison in the glass. He deliberately put it to his lips. He laid his hand on hers. It was cold. She looked up. Her eyes were even colder than her hand. But the morning was breaking, and the soft glow of presage from the eastern horizon fell in charity upon her cheeks. One warned him; the other urged him on. As he looked into her face his eyes spoke his heart; but his lips only yielded to a compromise between the heart and will.

“I shall see you again some time?”

It was strange that such a simple question required so great an effort.

“I trust so,” she replied. But it was the voice of Carleton Cottage, not of the hospital. With a sigh he withdrew his hand, touched the reins, and the horse started rapidly forward as though heartily glad that so much at least was over with.

To his unutterable surprise Kate Ashley extended her hand, and, clasping his in an eager and earnest grasp, exclaimed, “Thank you, Dr. Carleton. Now, listen to me. One who is very dear to you is in danger.” There was a passionate earnestness in the

voice and manner of the speaker, a soul such as Dr. Carleton had never dreamed of, beneath that cold and calm exterior. But the voice, after all, was so soft and low that he again drew the rein, lest he should lose a word. It was the most complete transformation imaginable. One could not have believed it the same woman who spoke now, as Kate Ashley repeated to Dr. Carleton the conversation she had overheard, only sparing the terrible accusations and the confessions of his father. "Your sister's life-long happiness or misery lies in your hands now. For her sake, for mercy's sake, save her!"

Without understanding his father's bondage, Dr. Carleton could not realize the cause for what he considered a greatly exaggerated anxiety. Surely it could only require that he should warn Maime, to thoroughly avert it all. The only shock he felt was in the thought that his father should have listened for a moment to such a proposal. More out of respect to the eagerness of his companion than from any idea that Maime was in real danger, he replied at once,—

"I give you my promise, Miss Ashley. I will save her."

Neither spoke for a moment. Then turning, Dr. Carleton looked in her face and asked, abruptly, "Do you love any one?"

She started, looked at him in silence for an instant, and then slowly shook her head.

"I am an infidel," she said. "I do not so much as know, in my heart, what true love is. I have seen

that it exists. I have seen it between your sister and Dr. Underwood. I was afraid for a little while that you thought it would be but a proper politeness to talk to me of love. Believe me, I know that you acted a nobler and truer part when you changed your mind. Am I very rude? Yes, love is too sacred to speak of it carelessly. I am a miserable sceptic, I suppose. I just remember that I left upon the window-seat in my room a little charm, a lovely little chalcedony, in a setting, which fits over the diamond in this ring. There is a quaint little rhyme engraved upon the two settings, a part on each; and the charm, I believe, is in the secret of that sentiment. It is able, I am told, to keep true love inviolate. If you find the gem where I think I left it, I wish you would keep it for me, unless before we meet again you discover what true love is. If so, give it to the one you love and who loves you; and may its charm prove all powerful. Now, God bless you, and good by!"

Dr. Carleton turned his way again to Carleton Cottage, with all its loveliness and all its hidden horror. But he was thinking much more of his own sorrow than of any uncertain danger which Kate Ashley might have imagined was threatening Maime. This was not through selfishness, but because he realized one much more definitely than he did the other.

CHAPTER XI.

ALL was as still at Carleton Cottage as in the great cemetery over the way, when Dr. Carleton returned. He entered the chamber over the veranda, and took the charmed chalcedony from the window-seat.

He was hardly seated again in his own room when Maime appeared in her wrapper, to announce the startling fact that she had waked to discover that their guest was gone.

"I did not hear a sound!" she exclaimed. "It must be she has only gone out for a morning walk to surprise us. But her trunk is packed, and all her clothes are in it."

"I am inclined to think, Maime, that she has gone away to stay," her brother replied.

"I don't believe any such thing!" Maime declared vehemently. "Do you suppose that she would have gone off without saying good by to me? I never in all my life met any one whom I liked better, except — except —"

She hesitated. Instinctively she felt that Kittie Cosgrove was a name which had better not be unnecessarily spoken. It needed on formal pronouncing, however; for strangely, perhaps, her brother was at that moment thinking precisely the same thought.

"I know that she has gone, and is not coming back," said Osgood, vacantly gazing at the charmed chalcedony. It was a lovely cream-white stone. In the centre floated a drop of clouded blood. Then, as he looked longer, it seemed to be covered with tiny drops; and still as he watched they all seemed to float together again, and became but one deep shadow in the centre. A narrow rim of gold surrounded it, covered with curious clamps and notches; and between them he could just discover the infinitesimal lettering of the charmed secret.

"If you know she is gone you know why she has gone," Maime said, at last; and putting her arms about her brother's neck, she looked into his sad eyes and asked, "Is it something that I cannot know too?"

"No, no, Maime, I am trying to tell you now," he said, kissing her. "You have no need to look so sad," he added, drawing her to his knee. "No one is going to eat you up. She went away because she had a very bad dream. She insisted upon going away at once, and in her nervous state I feared the delay might be dangerous, so I only urged her to stay as much as was polite, and then I deliberately drove her to the station. She did not wake you to say good by, because the dream was about you, and she did not dare to. She made me promise to tell you, though. She thought a monster from over in the graveyard there came out of the tombs and bound our father, and began to torture him, telling him all the while that the only way he

could escape would be to sacrifice you upon an altar." The brother shuddered; there was something frightfully real in what he was saying; and both the shudder and the reality were imparted by some strange, unconscious influence to the little figure on his knee. "It made such a deep impression upon her that she forced me to promise that I would tell you and warn you, from her, if you loved Guy to stand by him."

"I love Guy!" The blue eyes opened wide in astonishment. "Of course I do," said Maime, proudly. "And I shouldn't like to see the day when I wouldn't stand by him. You may just tell Kate Ashley so from me; and tell her I am ashamed of her for running away before such folly."

But though she kissed him, laughed, and went away to her own room singing a merry song, even her unobserving brother knew that there was something hidden in her heart, not expressed either in her words or song.

"She showed just the tips of her teeth when she laughed that time," he said to himself. "That is not natural for Maime."

It has always been a wonder, and will never be explained, how much and how minutely an unobserving person sees sometimes, and how very little and how very incorrectly he sees at other times.

At breakfast Amos Carleton sat as ever at the head of the table, and Maime opposite. Osgood sat upon the right. It was precisely as they had sat all their lives. And the place upon the left was vacant.

Amos Carleton made no observation upon the absence of their guest. Possibly it would have surprised him to have been told that the seat had been occupied at all by a stranger. Yet he talked more than he had ever talked before in all his life during that vexing prelude to each business day.

He was not what the world would have called social. That would have been an utter impossibility. But he was very unlike the silent man which the two before him knew as their father.

He spoke tenderly to Maime, and even asked Osgood when he was going back to the army, and if it would not be better to give up his commission and settle down in the city. He suggested that, after the war, there would be such a rush of young doctors for every available field that it would be much harder making his way. The carriage passed the window; but the automaton of business calmly extended his cup for coffee, instead of turning at once for his hat and the door. Osgood involuntarily looked into Maime's eyes. He had avoided them before. They were red. She had been crying. At the same instant Maime as involuntarily looked at her brother. They seemed to say to each other, "It is coming!" Then they looked away again. But it did not come, after all. For, having deliberately finished his breakfast, Amos Carleton as deliberately put on his coat and hat, and, saying good by as he had never said it in his life before, he turned again to the city, and soon forgot that he was a man with a family, or even a man at all.

"He is the noble father that I have always loved. God bless him! I knew he would not yield to that villain," said Osgood Carleton, fervently; and though he dared not say it aloud, he demonstrated it all in an old-fashioned kiss upon his little sister's lips. Having thus dismissed the matter, very like his father, he forgot about it altogether, and entirely failed to notice that Maime had not dismissed it too.

It was woman's perception, perhaps. It was something, at all events; and Maime was even glad when the time came that her brother went back to the South again, for the burden she was bearing was weighing heavily upon her heart. It was something she must bear alone. He could not aid her, and the struggle to keep it from him was almost greater than bearing it. There was a duty to be performed either to her father, herself, or her lover. She sought for it as only a girl with a true heart and a true love can. She had realized from the first that it was not a dream which Osgood had repeated. She had not felt a daughter's loving heart beat in her breast for two-and-twenty years for that strange man, ever before her, in her thoughts or in reality, without knowing something of what that utterly calm exterior was covering. She had not seen the deep lines grow deeper across his face, and the hair turn white as snow before her eyes, the nervous tension straining every motion, the inconsistent tenderness with which her slightest wish had always

been heeded, and the defiant generosity which constantly forced money upon her when she already had more than she knew how to expend, and withal the impenetrable ice that always drove her away when she struggled again and again to come nearer to her father than the simple formality of life, without realizing that they were all the results of some terrible burden he was bearing, or of tortures he was enduring to keep that burden from falling on his children too. Many a time her heart had ached till it had seemed as though she must speak to him, must do something to make him feel how she pitied his loneliness, how she longed to lift a part of the weight from his shoulders to her own, to carry with him the load which was bearing him down.

People had said to her, "He is killing himself with overwork. But he was always so. We knew him before you were born, before he was married, even. But it was always just the same."

Maime listened to them, but did not believe them. She knew her father too well. She had seen him change entirely as years went on, where even her brother thought him precisely the same. And Osgood Carleton, in his desire to be indefinite, could not have put Kate Ashley's warning in a more explicit and simple form. Instantly she saw it all more clearly even than Kate Ashley had seen it, and the details which her brother knew would hardly have made the matter more plain. She had left him singing, but she was crying when she entered her own room.

"Is it by offering me upon an altar that he is to be freed?" she sobbed. "Only me, and he has never told me! It must be to marry some man who has father in his power. I wish it were anything else in the wide world! Oh, Guy! Guy! Guy!" She wrung her hands, and cried in agony as the image of her lover rose before. She had not thought of him.

What! marry some other man, and give up Guy?

"No, no! Ten thousand times no! That is too much! too much!" she moaned. "I will do anything else, anything else. I can die a hundred deaths for him, but I cannot do that! I cannot do that!"

He had written her less than a week before, telling her of his success, and his certainty of being already able to support her as well as even her father might wish. But she had replied, "Not yet, Guy; not yet. Wait till the war is over, and see if father and Osgood will go into the city, so that we can live together there. I cannot leave Carleton Cottage while my father depends on me."

And now, now, what was coming now? Could it be that she was to be asked to leave Carleton Cottage after all, and not with Guy?

Her heart and her love rose up in opposition and bold rebellion against the thought. She would stand by Guy against everything! Then the haggard face and the snow-white hair of her father appeared again, and her heart failed her. What were all her promises of the past to amount to? Had he suffered in

silence all his life for her, and never, so long as she could remember, spoken one unkind or even a thoughtless word to her, and could she not suffer for him in return if he required it?

Then came the thought that he had not required it, and might not, after all. She started to her feet, and remembered how, ever since that morning, he had seemed more and more preoccupied, and yet more and more tender; how nervous he had been, and how he had taken nothing for breakfast that very morning but the strongest of coffee. She shuddered. Was he bearing still another blow for her? Was that master torturing him, and he suffering all for her, and even refusing to speak? Was he silently giving up his life for her?

With one great struggle, throwing Guy fiercely away from her, she cried, "He shall speak to me! I will find out who this monster is, and I will give myself to him."

Little did Edgar Stanley know of the friend he had at court. Little did Amos Carleton know who was making demands for him that he would not make for himself. Little did Guy Underwood know of the true heart that was leaving him. Little did Maime know of the choice to which she was apparently turning. She had not even wondered who the monster might be, coming out of the tombs, till it suddenly appeared to her that her father was hiding even his identity.

For a week Maime watched and waited. Early on Sunday afternoon her father returned from the

city. This had never occurred before, even on Sunday. So long as she could remember, Sunday had been just like every other day, except that he did not breakfast till an hour later than usual.

She was sitting alone on the veranda, thinking of Osgood, thinking of Kate Ashley, thinking of her father, but not for one random moment thinking of Guy Underwood, lest her woman's heart should fail her.

Her father was driven through the gate, and alighting at the walk he came with slow and feeble step and sat down beside her. She greeted him with a smile, nothing more. She had never kissed him in her life; he had never kissed her, that she could remember. But the smile faded and the lips were trembling instead, as she noticed how uncertain his motions were, how bowed his form, and how his head hung down, as though pride were something he had never known. He seemed suddenly transformed to a broken-down old man.

By some strange instinct it occurred to Maime that this was the last day of the month; and, while she looked at her father in terror, it also flashed before her that perhaps it was the last day of his trial. What more natural than for the fiend to have given him to the end of the month? She waited a moment, wondering if he would yield. He took her hand in his, and in a voice that trembled with emotion, he said, "Mary, I have not been such a father as I should have been to you and Osgood, but so far as I have had anything or done anything it has been for

you. Now, suppose, Mary, that the tables should turn, and that in my old age I should have nothing more to give, and could do nothing more; what then?"

Maime's heart gave an exultant bound of pride in her father, and her love for him was redoubled. He was not yielding. He would not ask a sacrifice of her to save himself. He was only tenderly preparing the way to tell her of the suffering that must still be brought upon her by his silence. He did not begin like one who was about to speak in his own interests, and Maime became stronger than ever in her determination that he must speak of them. She replied, almost merrily, "Then, father, it will be ours to show you that we have not been loved and blessed without gratitude. You have never yet given us an opportunity."

"Thank you, my child. I thought it would be so," said the father, trembling before the love that he had so little appreciated. "Yes, yes. I thought it would be so. You still love Dr. Underwood, don't you, my darling?"

Maime had never heard that word from him before. It startled her, and before she had considered what answer she should give, she whispered faintly, "I do, father." Had it not been for the lie, her heroic heart would have told him, "No."

"That is right, that is right, Mary. And of course you will marry him?" he added, fondling his daughter's hand for the first time in his life.

But now was Maime's longed-for opportunity.

Had she the courage? She paused for a moment to gather strength. It was more than a mental effort. Each little muscle was like steel, each nerve goaded to obedience. She looked steadily in his eyes, and answered, "Father, I am your child. Love and obedience are your due. I shall marry the man you select for me."

"Thank you! Thank you, Mary!" he said fervently. But the old man's voice was sadly broken, when one knew how firmly and calmly the words of Amos Carleton had always been spoken before. "Thank you, Mary," he repeated. "It is my wish and will that you marry Dr. Underwood. But, Mary, if I were to become suddenly poor,—if I were to lose everything,—do you think he would still love you and marry you?"

For a moment her heart and her will could work in unison. Indignantly Maime exclaimed, "If he would not, father, I could wish with all my heart that you were poor just long enough to find it out."

"No, no! No, no!" he answered nervously. "I did not say I thought he would not. You know I do not even know him. If Osgood is satisfied, and if you love him, you may be sure that I am pleased." Then his voice was almost beyond control. The words came very slowly. Each one was an effort. "But, Mary, what if your father should prove to be a—a—a criminal; only suppose, Mary,—you know I am only asking you questions,—suppose he should be put in State's prison for life. What then? You

could not blame him, could you, if he did not want to marry you?"

For a moment only sob after sob sounded, and Maime's heroic little figure shook in an agony which she could not control; but, suddenly realizing that her father's voice was still, she fell upon her knees, and, clasping his trembling hands, she cried, "Then, father, my duty would be to you, and whether he loved me or despised me I should never stop to ask." Then strength came to her again, and pressing still closer to her father, in her own low, loving voice she pleaded, "Father, you are in trouble. Tell me, oh, tell me that I can avert it! Tell me what I can do, father!"

Amos Carleton shook his head decidedly, Then he reverently kissed her white forehead. "No, no, Mary, I am not in trouble. No, I am happy, very happy in my old age. I only wanted to feel sure that the man you loved loved you, and that he would stand by you against everything. I—I—yes, I am very happy, Mary. I feel sure that he loves you, and I feel sure that when disgrace and shame come down upon me — no, no, Mary, they are not coming, they are not coming; only if they did, you and Osgood would not wholly despise me, would you, Mary? You would know that I did it for you."

"Tell me! tell me!" Maime gasped, — "tell me what I am to do, father."

Amos Carleton spoke slowly, and for a moment calmly again, as he replied, "Nothing, Mary. There is nothing you can do."

"There is, there is!" she cried, in her excitement, forgetting all but the end in view. "There is a man for me to marry, and avert it all."

"Would you marry a man whom I detest? My child, I would ten thousand times rather spend the few short years that are left me in prison."

Maime groaned as she sat sobbing at his feet. He looked at her in a dazed, wondering stare. For a moment all the latent power of his old nature had been recalled. His voice was strong. His will was firm as he spoke those last words. He was the cool, ever-collected Amos Carleton. He meant every syllable. But the sight at his feet swept it all away, and in the relapse he was older, feebler, more tottering than before.

"Mary, Mary!" he exclaimed, shaking violently, "you are not to do anything! There is nothing you can do. Don't cry, Mary. It will not be so very bad for you and Osgood. I have put away a hundred thousand dollars for each of you where the law cannot find it. And this cottage is all yours, Mary, — yours and Osgood's. It was your mother's. You'll have the shame of — of me for a father, and that will not last long." He pushed his trembling fingers through his thin, white hair. "Only don't despise me, Mary, you and Osgood. Don't despise me; that's all. I fought for years and kept it back out of sight; but now I am old, and not so keen and so quick as I was. My enemy came upon me, and I was not strong enough to keep him back any longer. I tried, Mary, I tried; but I could not keep him

back, and he will betray me to-morrow! O Mary, Mary! I am sorry! so sorry for you and for Osgood!"

The blue eyes of his child, glistening with tears, turned up to his with a love as true as ever blessed a father's heart, as she replied, "But, father, do you think that I or that Osgood would see you suffer, if anything in all the world could save you? No, father, no! and if it be only for me to marry some man whom you may indicate, why—" It was only a heart-throb that for a moment held the word; then gathering her courage like one who is fired by the sight of the life-blood flowing from his own wounds, she grasped his hand and cried, "Here, father, here is my hand; give it to him quickly, before the sun goes down!" She did not sob again or tremble, to magnify the value of the offering, but, quietly kneeling, with her hand in his, she waited his reply.

He clasped her in his arms. "No, no, no! my child, it cannot be! It shall not be!" he groaned, and sank back into the chair again.

He was no longer the self-controlled and calculating business man. With the tears that a moment since had burst the ice, the charmed cord of his life had snapped. Amos Carleton was but a trembling, tottering wreck. Maime, in her own struggle, did not notice it.

"Father, it shall be!" she said, little dreaming what a phantom of the past she was addressing, "and, more than that, it shall be done at once and willingly!"

"You are mad! you are mad!" exclaimed Amos Carleton, gathering himself for a moment in despair. "It is Sir Edgar Stanley! You are mad! Don't marry him! O Mary, my daughter, for heaven's sake DON'T!"

Only a moment, as that blow fell, Maime staggered under it. Then again she gathered herself for the last great struggle, and in a voice that was calm and low and determined, she said, "Father, I will marry him. It is my own free will. Come, come to the desk, father, and write the note. Tell him to come to the house at once; to come tomorrow, ready to marry me; that there may be no delay. I shall be — I shall be proud of an English — Yes, here is the paper. Write it quickly, father."

The poor old man had followed his daughter to the writing-desk.

Would that in simple charity and justice she could have seen the vacant, expressionless eyes which rested upon her; but she dared not look into the face. Would she had braved one glance as she dictated the letter, and he mechanically followed word for word. She would have seen that the soul of Amos Carleton was no longer in the watch-tower. She would have realized that her father had gone forever from Carleton Cottage, before that remnant of only half-animated clay took up a pen to respond to her command. But she was busy with her own concerns, and did not notice it.

The letter was finished, and for a moment the hand swung boldly as of old, while it formed the

signature. It was the last flush of the embers as the gust sweeps away the lingering spark. He was utterly unable to direct the envelope. Maime did it with her own hand, sealed and sent it to the city by a servant.

Not knowing what he had been doing, Amos Carleton crept up to his room and went to bed. It was broad daylight, but he did not notice it. He had never been accustomed to sit up long after reaching home, and was only following the habit of years' and years' contracting. He was still an automaton.

Edgar Stanley smiled as he read the note. "I thought it would come to this," he said; and when he had finished he muttered: "Guy Underwood, you and I are quits! You kept me from one fortune; I have kept you from another."

He appointed a day for the marriage so early that Maime had scarcely time to realize what she was doing when it was all done. Neither Osgood nor Guy knew of the marriage. Maime would not give them an opportunity to interfere.

The morning before the marriage, her father crept into her room. He had only recovered from the shock sufficiently to realize what was soon to be done. He had no thought, no power to prevent it. He crept in like a thief, starting from each shadow. He laid upon the bed a package of fifty thousand dollars in gold government bonds, and clasping his daughter's hand, piteously begged her not to tell Sir Edgar. "He will take them away

from you if you do, and you may need them some time, Mary. I have sent fifty to Guy and fifty to Osgood, and there's plenty more. Oh, yes, there's plenty more!"

He laughed and chuckled as he went away; and Maime, so rapt in her own troubles, did not realize that it was the first time in all her life that she had heard her father laugh aloud.

The marriage was strictly private; the father, the bride, the groom, the clergyman, and one old house-servant to watch the ceremony and open the door. That was all. His only daughter was married; and Amos Carleton, without waiting to bless the bride, fled from the room and crept nervously into his carriage.

"Faster! faster! faster!" he eagerly repeated to the bewildered driver, till the horses were white with foam.

He stopped at his land agent's office, and told him to rent Carleton Cottage as it stood, and report to his lawyer. Then he drove to his own office, and directed the driver to return.

"To the cottage?" asked the astonished man, who had always waited in the city till his master returned, whether by day or night.

"Yes, to the cottage!" said Amos Carleton, sternly. "To the cottage or to hell!"

As the old driver turned the panting horses he looked anxiously toward the office door, which closed behind his master, and muttered to himself, "In twenty year come next December that I've driv

for Mr. Carleton, I never see him carry on like that."

The first struggle was over. The fire was lighted upon the altar. Maime was married, and Kate Ashley, who had made that solemn vow to God upon her knees beside Maime's bed, had never been heard from again. The vow was broken. Only she and her God knew why.

CHAPTER XII.

DR. CARLETON sat in his tent, his head resting on his hand. In the other hand he held the precious chalcedony. He moved it slowly from side to side, watching the curious effect of the faint camp-light in the deep red cloud as it floated in the centre. But he was not thinking of himself to-night. He was dreaming of Maime and Guy. The mail van reached the camp. It brought him a letter from Maime. He opened it; it was not very long, but to judge of its contents by the way they were received would have been utterly impossible. It was Maime's confession. The brother read it to the end, and a deep frown furrowing his face was the only external evidence. He read it only once. It was very simple. It said, "My darling brother: Are you happy as you open this? I am sorry, very sorry, Osgood, but possibly what I must tell you will give you a little pain. Do not be angry, Osgood, for it was right that I should do it. Do not be sad, for I did it of my own free will. Before you receive this I shall be the wife of Sir Edgar Stanley. The warning which Kate Ashley sent me opened my eyes to the terrible tortures which father was suffering for us. He did not want me to do this. He refused to have me do it. But the penalty he must have suf-

ferred was such that you or I would gladly have given our lives to have saved him and counted it nothing. You would have done it quicker than I did, Osgood, if you could. I do not fear the sacrifice; but there is one thing I do fear, and you must help me. O my darling brother, I love Guy, and he loves me. Don't let him be angry, Osgood. He cannot be, if you explain it all to him. Don't let my soul be tarnished in his eyes. It will not be, if you tell him."

Slowly Dr. Carleton replaced the letter in the envelope, and put it in his pocket. He walked slowly down the forest-like bivouac. Some of the men saluted him, some even hailed him to bring them relief from their sufferings. But his eyes were blind, his ears were deaf, his hands were still. While the men were preparing for another day, he tried to write to his friend Guy. But words were an inadequate vehicle to convey his thoughts. In despair he placed Maime's letter, just as it came to him, in a fresh envelope, and directed that to his friend. Then he attempted to write to his father, but again he failed. Not from lack of words, however, but from the simple folly of spending reproach when the deed was done. Reproach? Yes, in all the debt of reverence which he fully acknowledged, he could hardly find the grace to remain silent, even after the deed was done.

He ground the anger into his silent soul, and in the terrible routine of battle-life four weeks went by without a letter, even to Maime. Whether he were

angry with her or only terribly pained for her, he could not tell. He only came to his senses when the mail brought him another letter, of a legal kind, bearing the still more startling information that his father had died, suddenly, in an obscure Western town,—died a helpless maniac, and been buried by strangers,—and that it would be necessary for him to return, take possession of the property, and assist in settling an estate which was somewhat entangled, but which promised to be much larger even than was commonly supposed.

Then he realized how his father too had suffered, and in his pity he forgot to be angry ; and forgetting to be angry he even blessed his sister for the noble struggle she had made to save him.

So soon as was possible he was at home again. At home ! Strangers had taken the lease, and were already in possession. Carleton Cottage offered him no welcome. With a still heavier heart he directed the driver to turn about and carry him again to the city. He did not as yet dare to venture upon visiting Maime, even if he could have consented to have become Sir Edgar Stanley's guest.

He found his father's attorneys in possession of a will made twenty years before, dividing the entire fortune between himself and Maime. More than this, the only information they could give him was that for over a month before he disappeared it had been very evident that his father was insane. At last he saw it all. He had no desire to take an active part in arranging the estate ; he left the matter with the attorneys, and took refuge in a huge hotel.

There was one, however, who was in much greater haste; and Dr. Carleton had not been long in the city when his first caller's card was brought to his room.

"I left word at the office that I would not see any one!" he said, turning fiercely upon the servant, without looking at the card.

"Please, sir," replied the servant, meekly enough, "he says that he must see you, and that if you have his card you will send for him."

Surprised, Dr. Carleton glanced carelessly at the name, —

"Sir Edgar Stanley!"

"Show him up!" he said, even more fiercely than he had spoken before. Then he crushed the card in his hand, and, slowly lifting his fingers, he stood looking at the wreck he had made of it.

This was what Sir Edgar Stanley saw, as he entered a moment later, and, under the delicate mustache, the classical lips curved in a satanic smile.

"I am glad to welcome you as a brother," he said, bowing very low.

Dr. Carleton started perceptibly, looked at him wonderingly for an instant, and replied, "I suppose I am your brother. I had overlooked that part."

"You are rather sarcastic," said the Englishman, smiling; "but if that is the way you propose to play your game, why go ahead. It would be better than having you too familiar."

Dr. Carleton began to regret the manner in which he had received his sister's husband. He spoke more

politely. "Sir Edgar, as my sister's husband, you are to me my brother. Only in the world let us be what we have always been to each other, nothing."

"I do not agree to that," replied Sir Edgar, coldly. "I could not recognize in my own house one who had failed to recognize me on the street. Rather, my dear friend, let us be enemies, here and everywhere. It will add a little spice to life, you know."

Even Dr. Carleton was started upon his own battleground. He had asked for a stone and been given a scorpion.

"I have a little business to perform with you. We will simply consider ourselves strangers till that is done, if it please you better. After that, I will not throw myself in your way again. And I warn you, if you would not meet an enemy, avoid it by never throwing yourself in mine."

"I shall not annoy you more than is necessary in seeing my sister," said Dr. Carleton, scornfully.

"You forget she is my wife, now," replied Sir Edgar, smiling.

"You do not propose to object to my seeing her?"

"Most assuredly!" declared Sir Edgar. "I advise you explicitly that if I should find you upon my grounds, I should treat you like any common thief. I am an expert in the use of your American revolvers, though I have not been to the war. I will prove it to you if I find you there. But this is not business."

"No, this is not business," replied Dr. Carleton, calmly. "Let us attend to it at once."

Gracefully Sir Edgar seated himself in the most comfortable arm-chair, and with one delicate hand lying easily upon the marble table he began: "I understand your father's death left you in possession of a large estate, the half of which belongs to my wife. I have come here to claim it."

The doctor looked up in astonishment. "I have nothing more to do with that than has my sister."

"I am quite aware of it; but you are the only other heir, and as such I want your order to the attorneys to turn your sister's portion over to me at the earliest possible date, as we are going abroad."

"I should suppose it should be paid to her."

"So do the lawyers. But the lady desires that it be paid to me."

"I doubt it," Dr. Carleton muttered, scarcely moving his lips.

"I supposed you would, from the manner in which you received me. But just here comes in my business. Your father and I were friends, associates, confidants. I was a sort of vault in which he kept his secrets. I could have buried him in a State prison while he lived, and now that he is dead it is in my power to sweep away the last dollar of his estate. Unless that money is turned over to me, and turned quickly, I shall put it to the test, and you both lose it all. It is a pity to be driven to such an extremity to defend a sister's rights against her brother."

"And more a pity when even that falls dead!" exclaimed Dr. Carleton. "Sir Edgar, when my sister comes to claim her share she shall have it and

mine, too, if she wish it, to bless her for the awful sacrifice she made to save her father. But rest assured I would not lift a finger to save a dollar of his wealth, except from you."

"Look here, Carleton," said Sir Edgar, and again the metallic laugh seemed almost to accompany his words, "we have begun at the wrong end in this. To fight like cats won't help us on, you know. Of course you want your share of the money, and —"

"You are mistaken," Dr. Carleton interrupted, leaning upon the marble mantel.

"Well, your sister wants hers, at all events," added Edgar Stanley, vexed with the indifference, which was the only thing that could baffle him.

"When she says so, I will believe it," Dr. Carleton replied.

"I said so," remarked Sir Edgar, curtly.

"And I doubted it," replied the other, stopping to brush an atom of dust from his coat.

"You do not believe me? You call me a liar?"

Sir Edgar was off his guard, and he bit his lip, more from mortification than anger, as Dr. Carleton replied, "I do," without looking up.

"You are going farther than you mean," Sir Edgar said, after a moment's pause. Then he rose, slowly, and taking his gloves from the table, remarked, as he turned the knob of the door, "A little thought will show you that you are acting rashly. Your father was a traitor to his country. For the past two years he has been running blockades with arms, and coming back with cotton. For

ten years he has been issuing counterfeits through his bank, and this is only a drop in the bucket. Now, if the money is of no value to you, and your father's good name is of no importance to you, you will at least admit that they may be to your sister; and for her sake I fancy you will agree to my terms. Good day, doctor; I will see you to-morrow."

Dr. Carleton hardly responded to the graceful bow as Sir Edgar left him. He saw the force of the Englishman's position, if what he said were true, and the sudden fear possessed him that its truth was at least a possibility. He was leaning upon the marble mantel, when Moses, a little black boy he had brought with him from the army, entered the room with a bound and a chuckle.

Two imperishable rows of glistening ivory indicated a broad grin on Moses's face as he nodded to his master; and, verily, Moses's mouth was so large and his body so small that the threat he often made to swallow himself, when things did not go to please him, seemed one of the most possible things in all the world for him to do.

Moses did not stop to look at his master, to see if it were well for him to venture a remark, for his remarks were always out of season. He had given up all hope of ever saying anything at just the right time; but in a voice that invariably made a stranger start and look at him in astonishment, wondering if that rumbling roar could possibly have originated in the tiny atom of a boy, he observed,

"Well, ef dat yeah gemman ain't a case, den dis nigger's name's no longer Mose!"

Dr. Carleton made no reply, but Moses was determined to be noticed, so he added: "S'posed de atmospherical pearance 'd be blacker 'n my hide, in dis yeah 'partment."

"Come, come, Moses; close up that sepulchre," said Dr. Carleton, half angrily, half laughing. But Moses minded the smile, and let the anger go for what it was worth to some one else.

He pushed his queer, great hands into the little pockets of his neat, blue breeches, and, quite forgetting to move the gold-banded military cap from his woolly head, he replied, "W'y, bress y', massa doctor, dat preacherish gem'n wid de florid like spots wha his bard wus bald, a-rippin out dem powerful aoves, all de way down de stairs, wus nuff to send de stone a-kitin from de doh uv a bigger sepulchre dan mine."

Again little Moses received no response, and, turning sadly away to attend to the duty that came next in hand, he muttered to himself, "He could n't 'a' been a-cussin dat away berry long, he 'd 'a' got clean out o' cuss words sho nuff."

"What did he say?" asked Dr. Carleton at last, more out of pity for little Moses's disappointed face, than because he cared to know what Sir Edgar might have talked about.

Moses turned with alacrity and a grin. "Swaller myseff ef I juss kno', mars doctor. Not so berry much mor'n cuss words. Talked like he 'd got kotch

in de rain, bes' boots on, an' no umbrill. I follered him from de doh down to de street fo' to kotch de tenor ob his conversation. Cause why? 'Pearin' as he did, I knows suffin was agwine ter bust, and s'posed you'd like to kno' what. Mose's feet bigger'n his, two to one, but dis chile nebber made de shadder ob de racket a-gettin' ober de stairs dat de florrid-like gem'n made a waggin' ob his tongue. One ob de waiters gud me awful cuff 'cross de year, a-goin' by de parlor doh, an' yelled, could n't I make less noise. But I s'posed he meant it foh de gem'n on ahead, so I nebber hollered worf a cent."

Dr. Carleton gave Moses a dollar to atone for the blow. Then he fell to thinking the matter over in the new light which Moses had thrown upon it in reporting the excitement and dissatisfaction of Sir Edgar, and the result was a resolve to make no concessions whatever.

"For the present I will remain where I am," he said aloud, as he stood by the mantel; and Moses, who felt exceptionally obliging under the circumstances, looked up from the corner where he was waiting orders, and asked, —

"Mars want ter hev Mose bring de supper up en sarve it on de mantel-piece?" But the only reply was the old command to close that wonderful sepulchre.

CHAPTER XIII.

SIR EDGAR did not call again, as promised. Dr. Carleton wrote several letters to his sister, sent them in various ways, but received no reply. He even visited the Stanley mansion only to be deliberately turned away by a servant. He returned to the city to philosophize.

It was evident that Sir Edgar could not, or would not, carry out his threat. It was evident, too, that only in his own coin could the English nobleman be outwitted. The doors of the Stanley mansion were bolted against him. He tested the friends of Sir Edgar in various disguises, but they knew as little about Sir Edgar as did strangers. He sadly missed his friend Guy in this search; for Dr. Underwood had left the city immediately after the marriage, and no one knew what had become of him.

Very few even knew that Sir Edgar had been married a second time, and a certain indefinite odor of evil that had gathered about the Englishman had by degrees thrown him entirely out of society. But Dr. Carleton found at last a valuable assistant in little black Mose. For two days he was away upon a mission; then he came tumbling into his master's apartments in the ragged clothes which had been

prepared for him, exclaiming, "O gollie, mars doctor!"

Dr. Carleton had repeatedly preached to the little fellow on the subject of profanity. This time, however, he made no attempt; but, seeing a promise of something in the black face and enormous mouth, he asked, —

"Gollie what, Moses?"

Moses looked up in holy horror. "Swaller my-seff," he groaned; "ef dat was n't a cuss word fresh from de doctor, den dis nigger's name's no longer Mose." When the shock had subsided a little he continued: "Bin gon dun it, mars doctor!" Then he grinned from ear to ear, and with the grin he uttered something that from long experience Dr. Carleton felt sure was his old formula, "De Lord's name be praise!"

"You're a long while coming at it, Moses," said Dr. Carleton; but the boy interrupted him, —

"I's jes right on it now, mars doctor." Then looking at his great bare feet, large enough to have supported a man of two hundred pounds, and stretching the black toes far apart, thinking, perhaps, of that little hut among the bushes, dreaming of the old plantation way down upon the Swanee River, he chuckled and grinned, and observed, "I's lied like de debbil fo' dese two days, mars doctor. And oh, gollie, 'twus drefful good to git back to it ag'in. Seemed like I wus home once more down in de sunny Souf. Bress my brack hide! 'Pears like I hain't had nuffin so drefful good sence we wus to de camp-

meetin' togedder 'n' heerd um yell. But ef dat yah preacherish ge'm'n ain't de mos' fo' cussin'! O mars doctor, 't would 'a' done you' ole heart good fo' to a heerd him a-pourin' out his powerful soul in de mos' enormity of oaves. My gollie! *I's* nowhar!"

It was no use trying to stop little Moses; for when his great mouth was full of words they had to come out very much as it pleased them. The hole was too large for him to sort them and send the right ones first.

It transpired at last, however, that he had gained a private talk with Sir Edgar's butler, and had given him one hundred dollars, which Dr. Carleton had sent him, with the promise of ten times more if he would come to the hotel, and give him some information. It was more than a week before he came; and then it was with fear and trembling, and with the assurance that he was laying himself liable to the loss of a place that was yielding him a magnificent compensation.

Before he asked a question Dr. Carleton paid him a thousand dollars, and to do him justice the man tried hard to furnish information, but utterly failed. Sir Edgar had very few servants, and those few were well paid to serve him faithfully. Sir Edgar was a hard master, with emphatic discipline. He had only seen the lady, Sir Edgar's last wife, a few times; she had dined in the great salon once or twice, but that was all. She had been ill, he believed, ever since. Food for the invalid was always sent to Sir Edgar's room by a wall elevator. He did not know who the nurse was, or who was the physician. He

was perfectly willing to watch, and report anything that could be discovered for the additional compensation that was freely offered him; but he was sure in advance that there was little chance, for his master saw to it well that those whom he employed kept to their own business. Sir Edgar was often away from home, but when or for how long none of the servants knew till afterward.

Still Dr. Carleton thought he had made one step of progress, when the next day the butler appeared again, with the unwelcome news that he had been summarily discharged upon returning to the mansion and finding the master fully aware of his absence.

"He's awful sharp," said the unfortunate butler, "and for listening to you I have lost the best payin' place I ever had."

Another thread had snapped; but, not discouraged, Dr. Carleton again applied his will and wits to the task of untying the twisted knot.

The new butler of the Stanley mansion would have been a more difficult subject for Dr. Carleton to have approached, even had he attempted to, for he was more wily. Yet he would have been far more serviceable to him, if he could have approached him; for, withal, he was possessed of that peculiarity so often attributed to woman alone by those who know very little of what man really is, — an inordinate curiosity. He was a large, bulky fellow, rather rough for a gentleman's butler, and with a strong German accent; but upon his first appearance he mightily pleased the pale-faced nobleman, and was not even

allowed to leave the house after his application. His duties were carefully explained to him, and for a surprisingly large compensation he was instructed that he would be expected to perform them to the last letter, and never, under any provocation, to go one step beyond. Sir Edgar Stanley noted with satisfaction that he filled his place to perfection. He was rarely mistaken in his opinion of human character.

The kind-hearted servants took it upon themselves to inform the new-comer, so soon as he was left alone with them, of all the peculiarities of the strange house, dwelling emphatically upon the appearance of unearthly spirits. These stories were not only told as they had really occurred, but greatly exaggerated.

"Mein Gott!" exclaimed the poor fellow, shaking in his shoes, "dod dings ish schust de deevil heemself. I droder not meet heem, so I vould." But his curiosity was aroused, curious as it may seem in a matter-of-fact German character. He sat down beside himself, and slapping himself upon the knee he asked, "Albrecht, vat you dinks? Vat for you becomes dis beeg pay? Ven dare's nodding wrong, you becomes ten tollar; now, dis man he speak funf und zwanzing — twentee-fiff — tollar? Some-dink's wrong! You finds out, dells me, all right!"

Thus, with commendable audacity, he began to look into matters about him as carefully as even Dr. Carleton could have wished.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE curious Albrecht carefully observed the hours which his master kept and failed to keep. He arrived at the conclusion that he was indeed a most irregular and peculiar man ; that many times when he professed to be away he was only closeted in his room, and that many a time when he was supposed to be at home he was away. He was told that his master's wife, a confirmed invalid, occupied a room opening only out of his own. Three times a day he was directed to send up by a little elevator such dishes as she might be supposed to relish. No one had seen his master's wife for months. Yet the dishes were removed from the elevator at times when he was sure beyond the slightest doubt that his master was not at home. Either the lady had a nurse or else she was not so helpless but that she could assist herself. Now, if she had a nurse, there was surely a mystery worth his attention in the fact that no one knew who or what the nurse might be. The cause for such a secrecy was well worth knowing. If she had no nurse, it was certainly very peculiar that she herself was never seen. Perhaps she was crazy. It struck him as the most probable thing ; but if that were the case, it was

dangerous for the master to leave her alone so long. On the whole, he decided that it was not only best for all concerned that he should investigate this question, but also came to the conclusion that about this mystery hung the whole secret of the big pay that had at first set him thinking.

With this fact established he began a study of the case that would have done credit to an accomplished detective.

The apartments above were always locked beyond his power of opening. Only one servant was ever allowed to enter there. This occurred only under summons from the master to work under his immediate inspection.

It was evident to Albrecht that there was something there worth seeing, and equally evident that the servant who did go in had never seen it or even looked for it. He began to inspect the immediate connection between his own apartments and those of his master. The elevator passage was not large. He wondered if by any possibility he could urge himself through it. During this examination an accident disclosed to him a curious combination in that simplest of all contrivances. Experimenting upon it, he discovered it to be an arrangement by which, when the tray had reached a certain height, it left the horizontal position and became an inclined plane, so that any dishes which were upon it must have at once removed themselves. Here was an idea which struck his German brain as being one of importance. He operated the in-

teresting automaton over and over again, with his head thrust into the elevator door below, and turned completely over.

"Dot's vat do de peesnisch ven he vas away," he muttered, admiringly. "Den mebbe he haven't got somedinks vat carry it a leedle fudder, or dot seek frau she schust goes hungrish dill he comes heim again." And so very curious did he become that it grew into one of the greatest necessities of his life to investigate that chamber. The elevator was his only hope. He measured the opening, and then measured himself. There were fully four inches in favor of the elevator. Forthwith he began such a routine of starvation as would have thrust the Banting system into the gloomiest shadows. He noticed that upon each Sunday night his master took particular pains to indicate that he was to be at home. It suggested to the German that probably, upon that particular evening, he was not at home. Knowing the secret of the elevator, it was comparatively easy for him to discover whether the dishes were removed by natural means, or whether they were left for the automatic combination. He listened carefully upon two successive Sundays, while starvation was working its wonders, and knew, beyond a doubt, that no human agency was used. Upon the third Sunday, just two months after having entered the employment of Sir Edgar, having decreased five inches in diameter, he proceeded to attempt to satisfy his inordinate curiosity.

First he locked the doors about him; then he

divested himself of all the clothes he could readily dispense with, and drawing himself into the elevator he laboriously began the ascent, aided by iron spikes, which he moved slowly up beneath him as he advanced.

Long before he reached the end he was ready to give up, satisfied, and go back again, but alas! those iron spikes would move upward, inch by inch; but bend and struggle as he would, he could not move them down a hair's breadth. He lost his curiosity, but he kept on climbing. At last the light from above began to fall over him, and, weak from hunger and exhausted from the exertion, he paused, and bending his body he looked up.

He groaned in horror! The upper door, less than a foot beyond his reach, was not so large as the top of his head. His heart failed him. His nerves, which had seriously suffered in the torture that he had inflicted upon his body in the last three weeks, now began to assert themselves, bent upon a terrible revenge. He shouted, but the muffled echo alone sounded in the narrow tunnel. He struggled with the iron spikes, but they held him fast. He was bound there in confines closer and more horrible than a coffin. Intensely his mind reviewed the results when his master should return and find him there. Doubtless, starvation would be counted a very pretty punishment.

By almost superhuman energy, the energy of despair, he forced one hand and then the other past his body and above his head. He could grasp the ledge

with his fingers. But to what end? He was suffocating, strangling! He was even worse off than before. He was dying! Losing his senses, in a position where to lose them was almost certain death. He was not prepared to die. He could not, he would not die. But what could save him? Absolutely nothing. The dim light from the aperture above faded before his blood-shot eyes. His head whirled in great circles in that narrow place.

"Mein Gott!" he gasped, and felt his fingers loosening.

For an instant he realized that the iron spikes had still sustained him, then all was lost in a whirling panorama. He seemed to be dancing upon some infinite trapeze, reeling through space with a universe of room about him; then he was being sucked down into the vortex of a maelstrom, and just above him came the devil and grinned at him. Suddenly, then, a fearful light burst upon him. It was the fire from the devil's face. And the devil took him with a great hooked tail, and dragged him into a place that was red with fire and light. At last he was in hell. He would rather have been left in the elevator, but no one had given him a choice. He lay upon the floor of the evil one's headquarters; but he breathed more easily, and suddenly realized that he was vastly more comfortable than he had been. If that was all there was to hell, why, future punishment was not so bad a thing as he had been taught to understand.

Gradually he became more cognizant of matters and things as they were. He detected the clatter of

dishes and the noise of knives and forks, and something very like the smacking of lips with the relish of good appetite, and came to the conclusion that the devil was taking his evening meal. His eyes were so painfully closed that it required a strong effort of the will to raise the lids. But at last they trembled and parted, when lo! he was in a most sumptuous apartment, — the devil's luxurious breakfast-room, no doubt! There was upholstery that upon the earth might have made glad the heart of an emperor. The walls were decorated with Oriental tapestries that would have shamed the fingers of the greatest of earth's weavers. The chamber was heavy with massive wood-carving; great oaken ornaments and solid oaken doors, with such panels as never could have been carved by human hands, and muffled by heavy, hanging draperies. Marbles in busts and statuettes adorned every conceivable corner. Masterpieces in the painter's art in such horrible designs as were most appropriate in hell, hung by great cords from the brilliantly frescoed ceiling, and caused a shudder of agony and admiration to shake the prostrate form of the poor German butler. And again the clatter of dishes and the smacking of lips aroused him, and drew his eyes to a lower level in the room.

"Mein Gott!" he groaned, yet not so loud as to attract attention, for his eyes rested on a gaunt and haggard woman of enormous frame, with gray, dishevelled hair dragging over her shoulders, only half clad; and where the naked limbs protruded, great joints were exposed that were more like the gnarled

warts on an old oak-tree than growths distorted from one of God's images. With her long, huge-jointed fingers or with knife, fork, or spoon, as might be most serviceable at the moment, she was crowding into her cavernous mouth, without mercy or partiality, every description of food that lay before her upon costly china, which Albrecht, the butler, to his horror, recognized as the fac-simile of that which he had each day laid upon the elevator. Then he said, "Mein Gott!" again, and the gaunt figure looked about and nodded to him, with an unearthly gurgle that might, perhaps, have been intended for a laugh. "It's a big man yer are," said she, "to 'a' come through s'small a hole; but these brawny arms, they're a power yit"; and she swung the great joints with the skin so painfully wrinkled over them.

Then she began again her merciless struggle with the food, and the bewildered German lay and watched her while he collected his senses.

"Und you dinks I come drough dot blace?" he said at last, pointing to a decorated panel that he now judged to be the elevator, beneath which was a low table, in an inclined plane, calculated to carry to its lower edge whatever was left upon it, and large enough to hold all that could have been sent up during a day's absence of the master.

"I'm jest the one to know!" exclaimed the woman, pausing for a moment in her exertions, "for it's these same arms that did the job o' bringing of yer out." And again she swung the ghastly

members above her head. "I heared yer scrapin', and thin I heared yer howlin', as I lay in a small cell yonder, and says I, 'There 's suthin likes o' salvation t' me in thet there bedlam.' So I jest put thim arms to work, and a-lookin' in the eye o' hope I bust the chains and bust the door and bust out here and here I wus. Thin I jest looked about me, en see nothin' to pay. But bein' free en hungered I ken tell yer, I put meself to work upon them victuals like a man, en while I wus a-eatin' I heared a rattlin' like down thet small hole. En thet 's the way I see yer and got me grip on yer back en hauled yer out." And she curled her long fingers suggestively, to show how she had got her grip. No wonder he had thought it the forked tail of the devil. But glancing again at the viands which had not yet wholly disappeared, she once more set herself to work.

The German butler was leaning on his elbow now, and gazing in a sort of mystified admiration at the mass of bones and joints before him. Then, more with a desire to hear her voice again than out of any further curiosity, he remarked, "I dells you dot dinks vas imbossible. I never comes drough dot leedle hole."

"But do ye mind thim doors thet open jest above it?" said the woman without looking up, for she had struck upon something particularly pleasing to her outraged palate: "hed ye hed the sponce ter come a little higher, ye cud 'a' opened thim without me help."

"Und brabs you tells me how long you pees as you says lock ope in dare," observed the German, his curiosity returning.

"Siven months come the first o' winter time," replied the woman sullenly.

"Hey!" exclaimed the butler, seeing something tempting ahead, "den you knows somedinks ov dis seek frau vot marries de master five, seex monds ago."

"Know?" shouted the woman, turning suddenly upon him like a fury from below; and the first impressions of the place so vividly returned that he almost thought himself again in the infernal world. "What do I know? Thank God, she lift him body and soul before the furst two weeks were gone! En more's the luck fur her she did it, fur she'd 'a' been taken body en soul be the divil afore this time, hed she 'a' stayed longer."

"Vot's dat you dells me!" said the German, sitting erect. He had struck upon something now that tickled his curious nature to the most exquisite touch. "She goes away, und he vot marries her — he don't know vare?"

"True wid ye!" said the woman, bringing one gaunt hand down on the table with a tremendous blow. "En now's I's saved yer life en set ye free, it's nip ter wan and tuck ter tither if ye does thet same be me, as I'm here for freein' her."

"Dot's peesnich," said the German, "und I schust dose dat dinks. You dells me dis, dot you sets her free?"

"I tell yer so!" she exclaimed again; "I drugged his wine, en she left him stupid-like, a-lyin' on the floor, en went her way. The more's the pity I'd not 'a' gone with her, instead o' yielding to her pleadin' to stay behind, en see thet he come to again. God brand his sinnin' soul wi' the divil's own postmark! He'd better 'a' died where he laid. Niver a day since thin thet he'd not 'a' killed me hed he hed the courage o' a cat. But whist! What's thet? Be the great and holy Moses! He's huntin' fur the keyhole, en he's drunk. God save me, this time! Fur liquor makes him bowld!"

She threw up the great gnarled arms and her huge jointed fingers. They looked like a fleshless skeleton.

The butler sprang to his feet. He was ready for action, and as cool as though he had never been excited in his life.

"Schust don't you drouble," he whispered in her ear. "Vot I hav' promise I hav' promise. I dakes you mit me from dis house donighd. You dells heem vot you got zo hungrisch dot you break your breeson. I schust hides myself pehind dis planket, und sees dot all goes vell. No fear!"

He darted behind the heaviest of the curtains, and secreted himself only in time to hear the door open, and know that the very peculiar master had returned.

He was busy revolving a matter of importance in his mind, and hardly realized the force of the conversation going on so near to him, till, with an oath from the master and a cry from the maid, he heard her

fall upon the floor. He sprang from behind the curtain. Sir Edgar stood with his foot upon the woman's breast, and was drawing his revolver.

"Damn you!" exclaimed the Englishman, fiercely; "I will settle you this time, as I should have settled you six months ago."

Then he suddenly found himself stretched at full length upon the floor, and the German butler above him calmly observed, "Gott vill not damn dis frau for souch a man ash you."

Dumb with astonishment, Sir Edgar struggled to his feet, only to be thrown down again by his irate butler, who wrenched his pistol from his hand, and quietly put it in his pocket.

"What do you mean?" cried Sir Edgar

"Mean peesnisch," calmly replied the butler.

"Do you want my money?"

"I danks you, no. I wants to go away und dakes dis frau mit."

"Well, go, and go quickly, for heaven's sake!" gasped the Englishman, fully resolved that they should not live to get very far away.

"I don't got sdrengd do go doo queek, mein herr; I see schoust souch a man ash you before. Komm, mal frau, ven dot pony arms ish so almidy sdrong schoust you dies dot fellah ope. Und mind you dies him dite, by sixty! Vot you say? You don't pees frighten? Vell, vell! I holds dis pistol mit his head."

Very calmly he directed the aim of the weapon, and the woman taking courage obeyed him willingly.

Once securely bound, the butler lifted him as though he were a child, and bore him into the adjoining room.

"Fur heaven's sake!" gasped the gaunt woman, falling upon the floor in an admiration that was too great to be supported by her feet. "Lave me alone, but Dutchie's ahid. Why I never did that same me-self is beyant me altogether."

The butler heard no more, for he was fastening Sir Edgar with the same chains that had bound his victim. It was in a dismal cell. Then he turned away, and had almost closed the door upon Sir Edgar as *he* had so often closed it upon his unfortunate victim, when a pitiful voice pleaded, "Don't leave me here to starve! I never injured you. I paid you three times what you earned, and I will pay you as much more as you wish. I never hurt a hair of your head."

For a moment the temptation to reply seemed to hang in the balance with discretion, but it won the day. The German butler turned upon Sir Edgar, suddenly transformed in every feature.

"Edgar Stanley," he said, "what you would do to a woman I will not do to you. You shall be freed before sunset; but I warn you to use your freedom well, or you shall suffer by a stronger hand than mine."

The inquisitive butler turned away, and, locking the door, Osgood Carleton left his employer's service forever.

At last he had taken an important step in the course of his investigation.

CHAPTER XV.

DR. CARLETON exerted every energy to restore the shattered woman whom he had rescued, but the shock and the freedom which followed were too much for her. The only reliable information he received was while she was partaking of that last grand banquet at the Stanley mansion. The only freedom which the poor creature found afterward was in an insane retreat. But time glided mercilessly onward, and the fall of 1864 found Dr. Carleton still struggling, and no nearer the goal. He had only arrived at the self-evident conclusion that, wherever his sister might be, she certainly did not wish him to find her. He did not lose courage; he lost hope; and from his early life and education fell, the more easily, a victim to bitter melancholy.

He was stretched upon the sofa, languidly wondering what the next step might be, when a wounded officer entered his room without ceremony. He sprang from the sofa, and grasped the proffered left hand, with a glance of compassion at the right, lying in a sling.

They had been brothers in the brigade, but shortly after the doctor's return the officer had been wounded and taken prisoner.

"By the God of War, Doc, I've done a mean thing by you, and the first thing I do is to get over it! The Golden Rule is knocked in the head by philosophy. I thought I was doing you a good turn; I was doing as I would have been done by." He was searching in his pockets.

"What are you coming at? What have you got for me?" asked the doctor, laughing.

"Why, a couple of letters," said the officer, producing them at last. "They came the day after you left for home. It was the eve of battle, and I was afraid that in the rush they would be lost and never reach you, so I put them in my pocket, intending to write you so soon as the battle was over. The next time I thought a straight thought was two months later, down in a Confederate prison hospital. Ten months more went by before I saw our own flag. I never once thought of the letters for you. They lay all the time in the pocket of the coat they cut from me. By some miracle that old coat followed me all about, and turned up in the hospital at Washington, after I was exchanged, with the letters still in the pocket. Hope there's no harm done."

In the labyrinths of his apology, and the while buttoning up his coat in military style, he had not noticed that his words were not the subject of Dr. Carleton's thoughts. He looked at him, and started from his chair. "Good heavens, Doc! I've done some mischief! Tell me who wrote the letters, and let me go to them and explain."

"My dear fellow," said the doctor, earnestly,

"I assure you no harm is done. It is only a letter from my sister. The other is simply one that I sent to a friend in this city some time ago, returned to me by the Dead-letter Office. He must have left the city before he received it. I understand him now. I have been thinking ill of him."

He threw the letters carelessly upon the table to convince his friend that he spoke truly, and inviting him to dine they left the room together.

The room had not been long deserted when a little waiting-maid came in to see that everything was ready for the night. She saw the letter, and, as almost any pretty little waiting-maid will, she picked it up, and, with eyes that were somewhat larger than usual, she read:—

"Osgood, my brother, you have not written to tell me that you are still my brother. And yet perhaps you have, and by some chance the letter has not reached me. I will not believe that you have forsaken me. Our father has been freed by a stronger hand than mine. You have learned before this that death has paid his ransom. I do not know, I wonder if my heart is dead too. When Sir Edgar told me, yesterday, I laughed for joy. I gave myself willingly, Osgood, and to this minute I feel that I was fully justified. I had hardly entered this house when Sir Edgar Stanley laughed at me, and said he had only made me marry him to punish Guy, whom he hated. He said he did not want me for a wife, but that he would have my money

to pay him for marrying me. It was all so terrible, Osgood, that I could not help it; I fainted. When I came to myself I was in a magnificent bedroom, and a servant was undressing me. Then she put out the light, and left me alone. Suddenly I heard a door creak, as though it had been left unlatched and had blown open. But in a moment more I heard a living creature breathing. Then all was still, and I thought perhaps my husband had come to tell me he had been cruel. I think I should have forgiven him, Osgood, if he had asked it, — for I was so miserable and so frightened. But suddenly I heard something moving in the room, and the sound of a chain dragging on the floor. I thought a watch-dog must have escaped, and found his way into the room where I, a stranger, lay all alone. I could hardly breathe; for I did not want to die there, Osgood, without telling you or any one what had happened. The sounds came nearer, and I heard a deep sigh, and the chains dropped on the floor just beside my bed. I did not know what there was about the room, or where the lights were or the doors. I did not dare to move, I did not dare to cry for help. I was not even sure that Sir Edgar had not done it to kill me. Then a cold, human hand was laid on my face. I screamed, but it tightened over my mouth and held me fast. It almost strangled me, but I did not faint again. Then, in a low voice, an illiterate woman told me a story that some day I will repeat to to you if God spare me. Osgood, Carrie Ashley, of whom Guy told me once, and whom you knew, was

kept for a year a prisoner in this house, locked in one room, and almost starved to death ; and then, because she would not die, Sir Edgar Stanley paid this woman who came to me five thousand dollars to burn her to death ! He murdered her ! Kate Ashley knew of it, and knew of this woman ; and she went to the city that morning to send the woman here to warn Sir Edgar that if he forced me to marry him she would expose him. But Sir Edgar kept the woman and bound her, and is starving her to death. She escaped ; but, instead of saving herself, she came to my room and told me all, and refused to leave till I left with her. She went back to her cell again, for I was too weak to stand upon the floor. I could not sit up again for over a week, but yesterday I was dressed. Sir Edgar heard of it, and came to my room to tell me that our father was dead, and to have me sign a paper giving him the property. I would not sign it. He only laughed and said, 'Never mind, my sweet one, I shall have it, whether you sign or not. If you change your mind, you may send me word.' Then he went out, and I knew what he meant by it. Osgood, am I not justified ? I am going away to-night. I shall not mail this letter till I reach New York. By it you will know that I am safe. If you forgive me, Osgood, meet me two weeks from to-day upon the steps of the Capitol at Washington. I am sure you will be able to get there or at least to send me some message. I will be there at twelve o'clock and wait till one. I have fifty thousand dollars in gold bonds, which father gave

me before I was married ; so do not fear that I shall suffer, and if you do not forgive me, and do not come to me, then I must say a last farewell in this. O Osgood, my brother ! believe that I did the best I could. Your loving sister, MAIME."

The little waiting-maid laid down the letter with a curious smile that curved two lips too proud and haughty to grace a waiting-maid without inconsistency.

"Murder will out at last," she said, and went on with her duty.

CHAPTER XVI.

OSGOOD CARLETON sat late in his room that night, pondering over the fate of the long-delayed letter.

"How could it have happened?" he cried, as if he would challenge Fate. But the night wind, as it howled about the casement, mocked reply.

Early in the morning the little waiting-maid came to the door. He was still sitting by the table. The letter was still open before him. He had hardly moved.

"It was so cold this morning that I thought you might like a fire," she said. He had not noticed that it was cold, and only muttered a faint "Thank you." The little maid seemed almost to have expected what she found, and went about the work saying to herself, "There are trials in high life as well as in low." And a moment later, as the new fire began to crackle and snap, she was singing that old sweeper's song, —

"Though I sweep to and fro,
Yet I'd have you to know
There are sweepers in high life
As well as in low."

At last she was only waiting to empty the hod of coal upon the fire. Her hands hung idly by her side. And when the hands of a pretty waiting-maid are

idle, if her tongue be not busy, she has failed to perform one half of her duty.

She spoke to the silent figure sitting by the table, vacantly studying the crumpled letter that lay upside down before him. One would hardly have thought that she would have dared to speak to him, or imagined that he would have noticed her if she did; for her voice was so soft and low, and he was preoccupied, even for Dr. Carleton.

"I met a lady of your name, sir, over a year ago. I was on the steamer 'Africa.' She was smaller than I am, and she had light hair and blue eyes, but she acted just like you, and she spoke like you."

"Do you remember her first name?" asked Dr. Carleton, starting from his reverie. He had heard every word.

"It was — I think it was —"

"Maime?" the doctor suggested.

"Yes, I think 'Miss Maime' was what her maid called her. And that maid was a very treacherous woman, too, though the lady did not seem to know it." She emptied the coal upon the fire, and turned to the door.

"Do you know where they were going?" Dr. Carleton asked, apparently forgetting the peculiarity of the question.

The maid turned, and, coal-scuttle in hand, braced herself against the door. "It's odd, but I do remember. She said one day that she was going to Florence, and she wrote afterwards to the lady I was

with that she was living on the Via Pandolfini. I remember it, because we lived there once ourselves."

"What was the number?" the doctor asked, eagerly.

"Bless me! I forgot that long ago," said the maid, laughing, and swinging the scuttle against the door to hear it click.

She sang to herself as she went down the hall, and laughed the next morning when told that the rooms had been vacated, and that Dr. Carleton was gone.

CHAPTER XVII.

WHERE? Why, to a distant city, with damp streets, dark and dull, winding away without system; with gloomy, gray houses, mounting to meet the sky far up above them; with windows set in the dingy walls like swallows' nests in a south-sloping sand-hill; with huge doors, all dust-grimed, down on the pavements, gloomy and ghastly as gravestones, with ponderous bell-pulls, horses' heads and lions' heads, and doors having noble old Nero-day knockers and great, ungainly iron knobs; with gas lamps guarding the doorways, one poised over each of them, ungainly and grim, till the sun sets, then red and lurid; with a broad square, all fancy booths and bewildering shop-windows, and a grand cathedral church right in the centre, all a great dome and pinnacles, and the Santa Reparata ringing in Giotto's Campanile over those wonderful works of art, those great bronze doors of the baptistry.

Then come cold streets again; cold in midsummer; and sombre gray palaces, more like prisons but for the great marble pillars, and the grand, gloomy court, with huge gods and lions guarding it; and the great porch opposite, Loggia di Lanza, nothing but roof and floor, and mammoth marble groups between them.

Then sunshine again, and a broad river ; stone ramparts guarding it ; bridges, — one, two, three, four of them crossing the current ; a beautiful broad avenue, from sunrise to sunset, skirting the river ; river wall on one side, wonderful show-windows on the other ; one long line of gleaming glass, and behind it lovely pink coral, microscopic mosaics, a maze of white meerschäum, magnificent in curious and costly carving, tiers of true amber and beautiful blue turquoise ; coaches crowding the avenue ; lords, ladies, and lackeys whirling away to the incomparable Cascine ; sidewalks all crowded, too ; brigands and beggars, merchants and mendicants, black eyes and black, curling hair, tinkling tongues telling of pains and pleasures in the most melodious of languages ; cripples, miserable cripples, asking alms ; children chattering like magpies in the morning ; sky of the purest, unfathomable blue, deepening toward the horizon ; and over the river and on the hill, San Miniato, white and still, looking down forever upon beautiful Florence.

Such was the rambling impression made upon Osgood Carleton, as he wound his way from the railway station to the Via Pandolfini in Florence, early in the new year. He found it easy to locate the building he was looking for, there being but one prominent *pension* on the street ; yet he approached it with many misgivings. He was hardly sure if even such excuses as he could offer would be sufficient to reclaim his sister's confidence, but he was not so near a trial of her faith as he had thought. His in-

quiry was hardly made when he was told that Maime had spent nearly a year and a half there, but left a month before. A week was spent to discover that she took the train for Rome. The driver was found who carried the lady and maid from the station in Rome, but he had forgotten where.

Rome was searched through and through, from turret to foundation-stone, and all in vain. The most efficient detective force of Italy was enlisted in the endeavor, and advertisements were freely circulated through the press. Three weeks went by, when a reply came up from Naples that some one answering the description had been living there. The next morning found Dr. Carleton on the spot; but it was a lady and her husband, and they had gone from Naples two weeks before. For one moment the temptation was strong to give up in despair. Give up! Dr. Carleton renewed the search. The Italian hotel-keeper was too anxious for the proffered reward to let it slip easily. He was positive that he had the trace of the person described. He followed Dr. Carleton back to Rome. He found him at the police headquarters. He produced the signature of the lady's husband, "Joseph Brandon." There was nothing in that to assist his case. He displayed a handkerchief which the lady had forgotten. It was a lace of elegant design, and there might be something familiar in the outline, which perhaps caused a momentary attention; but of all things pertaining to a lady, her lace handkerchief is certainly the very last article which a man could by any possibility remember. Dr.

Carleton returned it to the Italian with a pitying smile.

"It is very kind of you," he said, "to take this trouble, and I will pay your expenses in return. But you are mistaken."

Other replies were forwarded and followed as eagerly and fruitlessly.

Early one morning the hotel-keeper from Naples appeared again. This time Dr. Carleton met him with a frown.

"Begging the gentleman's pardon," he said, "if I am wrong the expense is to me. Did he notice a monogram worked in the lace of the handkerchief?"

"I see no monogram," replied Dr. Carleton, indifferently.

"It is here, it is here!" exclaimed the Italian eagerly, pointing to one corner, and laying the fabric upon a black marble table.

Osgood Carleton looked more carefully, and his face lost its indifference. On the delicate tissue, in the infinite grace of the mysterious texture, the letters "M. C." were wrought in one corner of the handkerchief.

There was no doubt of this testimony; but Joseph Brandon and wife had left Naples for Brindisi.

Now a new complication arose. Could Maime have married some stranger in Italy? Dr. Carleton was on the point of turning back, when he remembered that whatever Maime had done to find a protector, it was he who drove her to it.

"She called on me to stand by her, and I have made no reply. No, I will find her, and I will forgive her, whatever she has done. Poor little Maime!" he said, and started for Brindisi.

The name "Joseph Brandon" was easier to find, yet it was only to follow, as before. They had sailed upon a steamer bound for Alexandria.

On the way thither it occurred to Dr. Carleton that he was possibly only following a phantom, and that he might, after all, find that some slight mistake between the owner of the handkerchief and the wife of Joseph Brandon had led him on a fool's errand. But it was the only clew that six weeks of indefatigable searching had disclosed, and follow it he must.

The second day of his search in Alexandria he learned that the couple had left for Cairo only two weeks before. So near, and such a speedy discovery was an encouragement that Dr. Carleton found most welcome to his wearying energies, and with renewed determination he sought that great city of all people through.

In one of the principal hotels he found the names. He had not even looked for them there till other resorts had failed; for from its very prominence he judged it impossible that one seeking to hide himself could have selected it. It was evident that there was no desire for concealment in their actions; and yet this constant wandering and continual stepping farther and farther away, with no apparent cause and no apparent haste, baffled all the reasoning of his system and philosophy. Three days before they had

left for Ismalia. Why was it? It was as unlike the Maime of Carleton Cottage as day and night. Even at this climax he was sorely tempted to give up the search, and go back to America. It seemed impossible that the phantom he was following could be his sister. What motive could urge her to such unaccountable actions? At the railway station he paused. Two trains stood there waiting. In a moment more one of them would start for Alexandria, and the other for Ismalia. Which should he take?

"Only three days ago," he said to himself. "Three days. I had better see it to the end."

He went directly to the only large hotel, upon reaching Ismalia; and there, as he expected, he found their names, registered in a bold hand. He handed the proprietor his card, and asked for an interview with Mr. Joseph Brandon and his wife, but his hand trembled, and he was obliged to repeat the question before he made himself understood.

The proprietor looked at the card, looked at the name in the register, shrugged his shoulders, and smiling politely, replied, "They left this morning upon the little canal steamer for Suez."

Dr. Carleton sank upon the bamboo divan, sick at heart. Politely enough the proprietor asked if he would have a room, but he did not hear. A little later he suggested that the couple probably intended taking a steamer which sailed from Suez, in the morning, for India. He wondered if he had heard that.

Without noticing the puzzled proprietor, Dr. Carleton left the hotel, and found his way alone to the rail-

way station. He was surely the first person with eyes and ears who ever wended his way through those sandy streets neither seeing nor hearing the scores of carnal Arabs, vociferously shouting the virtues of their woe-begone little donkeys. He heard nothing, saw nothing.

It was dark when he reached the sand-buried station. He knew nothing about the trains, but as he entered, one was waiting there to start for Suez. Almost unconsciously he moved up to the ticket office, just as he would have done had the train been bound for Cairo. The officer almost closed the window in his face, mistaking him for one of the indifferent townspeople waiting for arrivals, when he muttered "Suez," and mechanically laid an English sovereign on the ledge.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"HURRY!" said the guard. But he did not hurry. He would not have lifted a finger to stop the train had he seen it moving out of the station. An officer was closing the last carriage door, when, seeing Dr. Carleton, he waited for him to enter. Four men occupied the compartment. They had doubtless come through from Alexandria. Three sat upon one seat, the fourth had stretched himself at full length opposite. It was impossible, in the dim light of the car lamp, to distinguish the features of any of the occupants; but Dr. Carleton's rigid idea of justice led him, unconsciously, to turn to the latter side for a seat. The man did not move, but inclined his head toward the other seat, as if to indicate that there was still room there for one more.

Dr. Carleton's temper had not been improved in the last months, and, possibly without sufficient argument, he abruptly caught the extended feet with his cane, and threw them to the floor.

"America," said one of the shadows on the opposite seat.

"Versus England," replied another.

There was something painfully familiar in the figure that suddenly rose up before him; but before Dr. Carleton could penetrate the shadows which the

hat threw over the face, and define the faint outline beneath it, the man suddenly and silently turned away, pulled his hat farther over his forehead, and sullenly seated himself in the distant corner.

Dr. Carleton was satisfied, and, seating himself, he utterly forgot the existence of the rest.

The three men opposite began a conversation upon their prospects, and the possibility that they might not reach Suez in time for the steamer. She was to sail at the unusually early hour of six in the morning. The train was an extra appointed to meet her, and was due at Suez at four, and at the wharf at half past. But already an hour had been lost, and there is many a slip between the cup and the lip when one is at Alexandria and the other at Suez. The wind was high and rising. The three commented anxiously upon it. The two opposite said nothing. If Dr. Carleton heard the conversation, he hardly heeded it. What did it matter to him whether they reached the steamer or not? One less interested would have supposed it mattered everything; yet as he looked at it through the morbid gloom that had been gathering about him, it mattered nothing at all. He had run upon a fool's errand. What harm if, like a fool, he let it fall through at last. The gentleman opposite him raised the window. A gust of wind swept in and covered him with sand. He closed it with a struggle, and looked ominously at the others. All were silent. It was evident that the wind had already caught up the sand, and was drifting it. The sight was a novel one, and Dr. Carleton raised his

window a moment later. He was glad to shut it without making a long investigation.

As he brushed the sand from his clothes, he began to reason with himself. From the very first of his search it seemed as though all the fates of Providence had been opposed to him. The opposition stimulated in him a new desire for success. Somewhat more anxiously he opened the window again a few minutes later. The wind was still rising, and the drift of sand driven through the opening was thicker than before. The train began to labor and move more slowly, and the throbbing of the engine showed that it was working harder and harder; but the greater the possibility of failure became, so much the more determined was Dr. Carleton to succeed.

Now the dim light within showed that the window was crusted with a solid coat of sand like frost, and the train crept on laboriously, while the ferocity of the wind seemed every moment increasing. The carriage rocked and trembled. Then as never before it appeared to Osgood Carleton that he *must* succeed; that, come what might and do it how he might, he *must* reach that steamer at Suez before she left her moorings. Almost fiercely he muttered to himself, "*I will!*"

But the train stood still. There was nothing but the sand-drifts that could have stopped it between Ismalia and Suez, and the blank faces in the compartment clearly indicated the conviction that the engine had given up the fight. Then for the first time the silent figure alone in the corner opened the

window and looked out. As the wind came from the opposite direction, he had a comparatively clear vision for a little way.

Closely protected by the cars, lanterns were shimmering red and a pale blue through the sandy mist, filling even that comparatively still air. The guards were anxiously moving to and fro. The chief passed under the window. The silent man hailed him. With an angry frown he put his face to the window. The lantern lit it up with a livid glare. He was evidently in haste, but the man spoke as indifferently as one would comment upon the weather: "What is the prospect now?"

Possibly aware that politeness is a reasonable commodity, the officer struggled to answer him civilly: "The prospect, sir, is very bad."

He turned from the window, but the passenger called him back, and with a more decided frown he waited the leisurely inquiry, "Is there any chance of getting the train through?"

"Just, and no more," the officer replied, more sharply. He would have gone this time, but the passenger held him by the sleeve.

"Would money make the mare go?" he asked. Each word he spoke sent a shudder through Dr. Carleton's veins. He listened intently, and wondered why.

"Money enough to clear away the sand and stop the storm" the officer replied, curtly. "Let me go. I must be about my business, which is not answering your questions."

The passenger did not appear to have heard the last, for he spoke as slowly as before: "If money will do it, here is a hundred pounds, which I will give you in Suez any time before six o'clock to-morrow morning. These gentlemen are strangers to me, but they will witness the offer."

Osgood Carleton never knew what impelled him to speak at that moment; but, turning to the guard, he said, "I will double the offer."

The officer, well satisfied that he had not been too officious, replied, "Gentlemen, if fire and water can do it, you shall reach Suez in time for the steamer."

The engine felt the force of the argument, and started on its way again. Hundreds of hearts upon the train were instantly relieved of a heavy weight of anxiety; but very few amongst them knew to what and whom their thanks were due.

At first it seemed impossible to advance, but the train was under headway with every pound of steam that the boiler would bear; and, despite the howling hurricane and the drifts of sand, the "extra" whirled along at a rate that under the most favorable circumstances might have been dangerous. In speed lay the only hope of cutting through, and for nearly half an hour they seemed almost to rival the roaring wind in its rapid motion.

Then the compartment in which the five were seated seemed suddenly to rise into the air, as though it had even found wings to accomplish the wishes of the occupants. It was only for an instant. The effort was a failure, and in the reaction the entire train

lay floundering in the sand. A hopeless wreck was all that was left to witness against the officer who would have won three hundred pounds.

Out of the wreck came Osgood Carleton and his neighbor uninjured. But the sand blew in such overpowering, suffocating drifts that the doctor was glad to seek the first shelter that offered itself, and under the lee of a part of the wreck, to sit down and await the chances of the night. All was lost. Action was useless. He wondered, as he sat there, if it were possible that He whose servants were those raging winds, and to whom the sand of the desert acknowledged allegiance, could be determined to thwart him in his search.

As if to cry for quarter from Him who alone was able to give it, he opened his eyes and looked upward. Unnoticed by him in his shelter, the storm had abated ; and, as he raised his eyes, through a break in the sand-clouds, which were rapidly subsiding, a bright star shot from the zenith, and disappeared low on the horizon in the direction of Suez. It needed no very superstitious mind to see in such a thing at such a time an omen of some sort. But of what was it ominous ?

This question occupied Dr. Carleton's thoughts as he sat with his head bowed upon his knees, when a metallically musical voice sounded in his ears. There was no emotion, no anger or hatred evident, as it said, —

"Dr. Carleton, we were too much in haste to reach Suez. It is not well that both of us should be there,

either now or later. We have met as enemies, let us part forever. We need no seconds or witnesses. We will walk a mile away upon the sand, and practice upon each other until one of us falls dead. It will while the time away, and one of us will forget this disappointment."

Dr. Carleton looked up. The form of the man he had insulted in the car was bending over him. In the gathering light, as the moon pierced the thinner tissue of sinking sand, the white teeth glistened and the lips were parted with a smile. He sprang to his feet. "Edgar Stanley!" he exclaimed. "Yes, you are right; we meet as enemies, and this world is not large enough for us both to live in it. But I have no weapon here, and my business in Suez is more important than my pride. I will not meet you now; but, so sure as I accomplish what I am intent upon, then I will render you such satisfaction as may be pleasing to both of us. Away with you till then!"

Sir Edgar smiled, and scarcely louder than he had spoken before, he replied, "Delays are dangerous. Fight with me here, or by my life you shall not see Suez! I have more pistols than we two shall want just forward in the baggage van."

Osgood Carleton simply replied, "Go forward and get them; I will meet you now." And the figure of Sir Edgar left him without another word.

Ten minutes he waited, but his enemy did not appear. He doubtless had some difficulty in finding his baggage. The doctor rose, and walked slowly toward the front of the wreck. The storm had now

abated, and, as he went, he saw beyond mistake that the engine was slowly moving away upon the track. They had evidently righted her, and she was going alone to Suez. Without a moment's thought he sprang forward, ran as for his life, and before she had floundered through the drifts and gained a firm hold upon the track he was clinging to the tender-chain. She moved more rapidly.

The storm had evidently been but a local one, and, before he had gained his breath to call for help or move from his precarious position, the engine was upon a smooth rail, and whirling onward like the very wind. To have gained assistance would have been impossible. Clinging with one hand to the swinging cab he wound the loose chain about him, and caught the broken link, finding a partial rest for one foot, while clinging with his hands he gasped for breath, and began to estimate the possibilities of his physical endurance. He clearly saw that unless the terrible emergency should provide him with a strength that is often heralded as supernatural, he must certainly fall, and, as Sir Edgar had threatened, never reach Suez. Faster and faster the engine flew, but with each revolution of the wheels his determination became stronger.

It might have been more rational for him to have said, "What if I do not reach the steamer? I shall be but two weeks behind if I take the next." But in the excitement of the moment he lost sight of the real object in grim determination to reach Suez. More than once his foot was shaken from the ledge, and he

felt instinctively that the time would soon come when it would be impossible for him to replace it. But gradually the energy of his will subsided. The pain of the position became less defined. His thoughts came and went in a more random way. His head fell helplessly forward, and his body lay heavily in the chain.

"I am going to Suez," he muttered; and the jolting of the tender took up the sentence, and seemed forever repeating, "Going to Suez! Going to Suez! Going to Suez!" Then he wondered if he were really going to Suez, or if it were only a dream. It was more like a dream, after all; for now he thought he heard the night watchman pounding upon his door.

"I am going to Suez!" he shouted; then he laughed at himself, and replied, "No! no! I mean I am coming. Stop your pounding! I'm awake!" He struggled to throw off the drowsiness that stubbornly refused to leave him. It was for something important that he was being called; but what it was he had forgotten, and, in spite of the conviction, he was much inclined to let it go, while he turned over for another nap.

But still the watchman kept on pounding; and suddenly it occurred to him that he had failed to keep his appointment with Sir Edgar, and that doubtless Sir Edgar had sent for him.

"Tell him I'll be there! Did n't I say I would?" he shouted, and made another frantic effort to rouse himself.

Then a bright light flashed before his eyes.

"Robbers!" he ejaculated; but in the light he saw the figure of Sir Edgar, and realized that he had hidden in his room, and was there to murder him.

Again the light flashed, and he woke to find himself struggling in the chain that bound him to the cab, with the red sun rising out of the desert under a dense cloud. The water was on one side and Suez on the other.

How strangely that old gray sandstone town looked to him in that early morning light! How cold and numb he felt, and how he wondered what power had held him in that precarious position through that strange stupor which in reality had doubtless saved his life! The engine had won the victory for him, and was slowly coming to a stop. It was action now, and action instantly. But for what? It seemed utterly immaterial to him now. He could not understand why he had ever cared about reaching that steamer. If Maime were there, it was because she wished to be. What had he to do about it? And at best it was but a supposition of the hotel-keeper at Ismalia that she might have taken it. He moved in his chain, and the relief was so great that he was almost tempted to sleep again. But the engine stopped. He loosened the chain, and fell helplessly to the ground.

Gaining his feet, he looked about him. Morning was faintly breaking, but the sun had hidden behind the cloud. There was no station, no building near at hand. He crossed the track, and stood upon the

water's edge. The engine backed on to a switch, and pushed away in the direction of Suez. He knew that the steamer must lie at the docks far down the water in the opposite direction; but in the fog that was gathering he could see nothing, and stood there quite uncertain as to whether it was worth his while to try further. A carriage-road crossed the track at a little distance. He could not see where it went; but as he stood watching it, vaguely wondering how soon any one would pass, a cab drew up, and, before his eyes, beyond the shadow of a doubt, Edgar Stanley entered it, and was driven hastily away.

"Great God!" he muttered, suddenly comprehending the cause of his sister's flight, and the object of Sir Edgar's presence; and, wondering that he had not thought of it before, he added, "I must be there if he is! Yes, and *I will!*"

A lonely Arab jogged slowly down the track. There was no one else in sight. He looked at his watch. It was half past five. He called to the Arab, and said, "I want to go to the steamer for Bombay."

"Stimmer Bombay, stimmer Bombay! Yes, yes!" replied the Arab, pointing in the direction taken by the cab in a way to indicate that he had no time to spare.

"How far is it?"

"Yes, yes," replied the Arab, urging him on, but evidently knowing no more of English. Dr. Carleton started down the track as rapidly as his stiffened legs would carry him. Soon the road began to diverge perceptibly from the track, and, in hope of

receiving some assistance upon the former, he left the rails. A mule, laden heavily with fresh dates, came out of the mists. A gaunt and weary-looking woman drove the mule, and he began to bargain with her for the animal. Alas, she understood less than the man! In despair he gave her a sovereign, threw the bags of dates upon the ground, and, while she stood by in horror, he mounted the mule and rode away.

For a few moments the frightened creature almost rivalled the engine in its flight; but when the woman was well out of sight, and only the endless sand lay about him, the animal came to his senses and stood still.

It was an absurd adventure, and the unfortunate rider smiled grimly as he bent his angry joints, dismounted, and walked away.

For ten minutes each muscle was driven to its utmost; then, like the mule, they began to rebel. He was ready to fall, when a carriage appeared in the distance, and gave him strength. As he approached it, however, he recognized to his horror the same which had left the crossing with Sir Edgar. One could hardly call it cowardice that his heart should fail him then. He was in no condition to face that man; still he pushed a little nearer, and as he approached he discovered that it was a wreck.

The driver understood a little English, just enough to indicate that his passenger had taken to the track. He made him an offer for his horse, which was readily accepted, and again Dr. Carleton was mounted.

He rode a mile or more, and again looked at his watch. It wanted but seven minutes of six o'clock by Cairo time, upon which the steamer would sail. Seven minutes! There was nothing but sand in sight. The horse was intolerably slow; and, just before him, the road turned away from the track again, this time extending far into the fog-banks, in directly the opposite direction. He felt sure that he must have passed Sir Edgar; and, with chances which were certainly better than his enemy's, he left the horse in the road and was again walking on the track. Soon he detected a sharp clicking along the rails, warning him of an approaching train.

It was just two minutes before six. The train was coming from the wharf. Surely Sir Edgar was not before him, or he would have stopped the train whatever it was. It proved to be only an engine and two freight cars. Dr. Carleton stood between the rails, and frantically waved his hat.

The train stopped. The driver swore a great English oath, and asked him what he wanted. He hailed that oath with a cry of joy, and, mounting the steps, he emptied upon the seat of the cab the last pieces of gold from a purse that had been filled with a view to meeting many emergencies.

"Take it!" he gasped "I must reach the steamer for Bombay."

The engineer looked at him in amazement for a moment; then with a smile reversed the movement, and the freight train started toward the wharf.

Dr. Carleton sank helplessly upon the vacant bench.

"Thank you," he muttered faintly. He looked at his watch again. It was six o'clock.

"I'm only a takin' ye back t' the wharf," said the engineer, after he had pocketed the gold, "fur the steamer must 'a' started afore this time. The bell rung es we left."

"Never mind, never mind!" groaned Dr. Carleton; "only get me to the wharf as quickly as you can."

"I'll do it," said the engineer, and the train moved faster.

They were just upon the wharf when Dr. Carleton asked, "Did you pass any one on the track, as you came out, who might have reached here in time to have taken the steamer?"

"Not a sign but the hand-car bringin' the purser," said the engineer; and, without waiting for the wheels to stop, the doctor leaped upon the platform and ran toward the moorings.

A sheet of blue water washing restlessly against the pier, little white-caps, and disturbed eddies, and a line of froth that swung on the waves lay between him and the retreating steamer, nearly twenty rods away.

"Is there any way that I can reach her?" he asked the wharf-master, who was lazily smoking.

"Why wer'n't ye earlier?" asked the official rudely.

Dr. Carleton could have strangled him, but the importance of the moment prevailed. He put his hand in his pocket, and shuddered as he remembered

that the purse was empty. An instant later he had caught his watch, dragged it from the chain, and holding it in the air exclaimed, "This to the man who will put me on board that steamer!"

"I'm yer man," growled a well-tanned tar, leaping to his feet. "Follow me lively, now," and he slipped over the side of the wharf and into a small boat, followed closely by his passenger.

A moment later they were shooting over the water, rapidly lessening the distance between them and the steamer.

"I have been a fool!" said Dr. Carleton, as he sat in the stern, with nothing to do but watch the oars. "I have lost my head; and, worse than that, I have lost it for nothing." Then he waited and watched the oars again, and thought he would not give five cents to reach that steamer. But while he watched she moved more rapidly, getting under headway.

The boatman looked over his shoulder.

"Shiver my timbers! I b'li've she'll win!" he gasped, and pulled till the oars bent and trembled. He groaned and tugged, but to no purpose.

Suddenly rousing to the fact that he was being beaten at the last, Dr. Carleton grasped a pair of oars lying in the bottom of the boat, and, placing them in the rowlocks, he who would not have given five cents to have been safe on board, pulled with an energy that inspired even the weather-worn arms of the sailor behind him.

Together they won the day, and, wet with perspiration, trembling in every nerve from the terrible

exertions of the last six hours, Dr. Carleton stood upon the deck of the steamer for Bombay.

Had he failed it would have been the first time in his life that Osgood Carleton had felt the force of that unfortunate word. But without waiting to congratulate himself, he sought the chief steward, and asked the fatal question.

Joseph Brandon and wife were not upon the steamer.

Fortunately Dr. Carleton was still supplied with an abundance of English circular notes ; and, securing a state-room, overcome by chagrin and fatigue, he entered, to remain in his berth till the steamer dropped anchor at Aden, the great coaling point half-way between Suez and Bombay.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE deep throbbing of the machinery was still. The anchor lay at rest among the coral reefs. Aden, bleak and bare, with its stone huts, its great, incomprehensible tanks, its ruins that no one can explain, its craggy hills, its barren fields, its rainless sky, its row of coal barges along the bund, its scattering shipping in the bay, its still water and dormant fishermen; its throng of children, naked to the skin, swimming, swimming, swimming all day long without respite or refreshment, like so many little brown water-babies, about the steamer, diving to any depth for coppers that the passengers throw over to them, going down, all of them, for every piece, and never losing a farthing; coming up, all of them, as soon as some one has secured the prize; lying about in the water, laughing and chatting in that old, old language, so fierce and horrible when one hears the Bedouin shout in the desert at night. All this and much more, Aden, with its great rock-locked harbor lay just to the lee, and the steamer was anchored in the bay.

The horrible noise of coaling drove Dr. Carleton from his state-room; and, as he stood upon deck, looking at that curious anomaly called Aden, a chord of sympathy thrilled and vibrated in his being. He

was seized with a longing to stand upon the barren soil of that miserable Arab city, and to cry, "Lo, here! I am thy brother." And the longer he looked at that lonely, shivering town the more he longed to be in it.

A gaunt Arab boatman stood by the rail, pitifully pleading for a passenger to row ashore. Osgood Carleton followed him silently, and reached the shore without once looking back toward the steamer. He sought first the only European clothiers, and so far as possible renewed his dilapidated outfit; then entering one of the proverbially low and narrow carriages of Aden, he ordered the driver to carry him anywhere, anywhere in the world. The driver sat down at his passenger's feet, and the old horse moved off upon the usual round, without more definite direction than his master had received. There is only one way to go at Aden.

At one place after another the well-trained and poorly fed animal waited of his own free will, while the driver dismounted and talked to his passenger in a sort of nondescript, which he supposed to be English; until he discovered that the words were unheeded as well as the wonders of Aden. Then he lapsed into silence.

At last they arrived at an old hostelry, where travellers always stopped for refreshment, and where the hired horses were always fed.

Some mutual understanding must be arrived at here; for the old horse knew better than to move another inch, whether the passenger wished to stop or not.

The driver talked and gesticulated all in vain. Dr. Carleton's thoughts were far away from the old hostelry. At last, however, the driver alighted and began to feed the horse. This was more to the point; and Dr. Carleton alighted, too, but he did not enter the hostelry. It was a low, vile, uninviting place. What had he to do in there? Nothing. He walked away over the rocks beyond.

He had not gone far when a voice behind him spoke his name, and, turning in surprise, Dr. Carleton discovered the smiling face and tall and graceful figure of Sir Edgar Stanley.

"Good heavens! Not now!" he gasped. But Sir Edgar only smiled, and presented for his choice two worthy revolvers.

"Examine them. Take your choice, — they are alike. Here is a fresh box of cartridges. Load to please yourself."

Dr. Carleton took one of the two pistols and the box of cartridges, and loaded the six chambers without a word.

What did he care whether he lived or died? or, if he died, what if it were out upon the barren plain of Arabia?

"Now, if you are satisfied," said Sir Edgar, "walk away ten paces from this rock. I will put a little powder upon it, light a slow-match, and walk away as far in the opposite direction. When the powder flashes, we will open fire. If the six balls are not enough, we will load again. It will be more honorable than the trick you played upon me as my

German butler, or one which I might have played upon you five minutes ago, if I had been treacherous enough." His red lips curved scornfully.

Dr. Carleton stood in position. The slow match was lighted by a hand so steady that even the tiny flame did not flicker. And, as calmly as though taking his place for a game, Sir Edgar counted the paces, and faced his enemy. With pistols ready for instant use, the two men watched the progress of the spark along the slow match.

How fitfully the fire crept on! Suddenly there was a little flash. Each man started, but it was only the slow-match, and with the flash it lost the fire. Sir Edgar laid his pistol carefully upon the ground, and, walking deliberately forward, lighted the slow-match and returned. But this time his step was less firm. The accident had disturbed him. He raised his pistol as though he would have fired even before the rock gave the signal. Then he dropped it again, and endeavored to collect himself. He stood with his weight upon one foot, then on the other, and eagerly looked at the slow-match. He was losing self-possession even more rapidly than Osgood Carleton was gaining it.

Suddenly the flash came. Sir Edgar started, as though he had not expected it. His ball entered the ground, not five feet from where he stood. He staggered for an instant, as though his enemy's shot had already taken effect; then he hastily prepared to fire again. He lifted his pistol and looked up. But he stopped in the act. His hand fell at his side.

He looked at his antagonist in astonishment, for he stood precisely as he had while waiting for the signal. Evidently he had neither fired nor moved.

"Did not the powder flash?" muttered Sir Edgar.

"I think so," replied Dr. Carleton, calmly.

"Are you going to fire?"

"No!"

"Why not?"

"I should gain nothing by killing you," Dr. Carleton replied, so calmly that for a moment even Sir Edgar forgot himself.

The next instant, however, the Englishman exclaimed, "I swear that you shall fire, or die where you stand without firing!"

He lifted his pistol.

"Fire!" said Dr. Carleton, calmly, throwing his pistol on the ground, and quietly folding his arms.

Sir Edgar hesitated. It took something more — or less — than he possessed to shoot a man in that condition. "If you will spend to-night in Aden," he said, "I am willing to call our difficulties off."

"I have no mind to strike a bargain with such as you," replied Dr. Carleton, without moving. "Be assured that your company is so little to my taste that if you stay in Aden to-night I shall go on to Bombay, if I live; and if you should go on I shall stay here, whether a man or a corpse."

"Agreed!" exclaimed Sir Edgar, "once more we are friends! Now tell me how the devil you reached this place. When I left you in that Egyptian sand, to hunt for these pistols, I found the engine ready to

start on alone for Suez, and, thinking more of meeting that steamer than I did of killing you, I dropped the subject, pocketed the pistols, and got into the cab. I took the only hack upon the road at Suez, and started for the wharf. It broke down with me, and I took to the track. Thank heaven, a hand-car came along, carrying the purser to the steamer, and took me in. The ropes were swung loose the moment we were on board; and you may judge my surprise when I saw you on deck, watching those God-forsaken children swim, this morning. To tell the truth, as a friend, I rather hated to kill you till my curiosity had been appeased, and I knew how the devil you got yourself here."

"Edgar Stanley," said Dr. Carleton, "you have named terms of peace. I have accepted them. They are that we part. I bid you good day." He turned abruptly in the opposite direction and walked away.

Sir Edgar smiled, went back to Aden, and, as the sun was setting, sailed away upon the steamer, while Osgood Carleton began the task of waiting for the next mail to carry him back to Suez.

At last two days had passed. With the length of such, one might measure eternity. The bunder and the shipping on the bay were the only signs of life, and to those Dr. Carleton turned in despair. That shivering town had not the fascination of sympathy, after all.

The second evening came with its soft breeze to cool the heated coast. A short distance before him,

on the street, Dr. Carleton saw a couple in English dress. All his life long he had hated the world, and longed for solitude. Aden had satisfied him. He hastened toward the couple, wondering if he might not venture to speak with them. He hurried past them, and at a little distance turned to retrace his steps that he might see their faces, but they were gone. He sought in vain for them.

Once again he met them, this time upon an old highway of the old Arab city, as far from the wharves as possible, and this time face to face. There was a low cry of terror, followed by an exclamation of joy ; and Maime lay locked in her brother's arms.

CHAPTER XX.

THE night was not so terrible as the shadow it had cast before. It was all too short in which to tell and be told all that had transpired in twenty-two months that seemed a lifetime, — a weary, long one.

Failing to find her brother, or to hear from him in Washington, Maime had sailed with a heavy heart for Europe, and in Florence tried to drown the sorrow that lay upon her like an evil dream; so suddenly had it transformed her life from the loveliest of sunlight to the dark shadows that gave her not even the comforting assurance of hope. She had heard of her husband in Paris, and later that he had come to spend the winter in Florence. She had fled again, and found only a temporary refuge in Rome, to meet him one day upon the Corso. In all that motley multitude of high life and low, — of princes who live like paupers at home, that they may throw their little substances where they will be seen of men, and misers of fabulous wealth, who walked the streets in rags, pleasure-seekers, poison-mongers, great men and women, and numberless nonentities, — he recognized her, fastened his eyes upon her with that fearful smile, and followed her till by some almost superhuman means she succeeded in avoiding him and

making her escape to Naples, where, under an assumed name, with her maid garnished as a man and acting as her husband, she had lived another month. Then she had cause to fear that he had again discovered her, and went even further from the world in order to escape him, and landed at Alexandria. By keeping herself informed of the incoming steamers, she heard of his approach, and went to Cairo. Still he followed her. Gaining the Bombay steamer by a circuitous route, she again changed every appearance, name, and identity, only to find him on board, and know that again he had penetrated her disguise. He never approached nearer, but haunted her day and night, incessantly keeping just so far away from her. She had only escaped him at last by bribing the officer of luggage to assist her in landing just as the steamer weighed anchor.

This was her story. Then a more important topic called upon them. Another step must be taken, and where should it lead them?

"Back to America," said Osgood, decidedly.

"How shall we get there?" Maime asked. "The next steamer will come from Bombay, and Sir Edgar will be upon it."

"We must seek legal protection, and then appeal for a divorce."

"Osgood, he has done nothing," Maime replied, in a voice indicating that she had long ago probed that hope. "He did not desert me, I deserted him. He never harmed me. I drugged his wine. He has not so much as touched me once with the tips of his

fingers. From what could I ask for protection? For what could I get a divorce? No, Osgood, I'm so glad I have met you, and the past is all cleared up. That was the worst to me. Now you go back to America, and I will go somewhere until I have hidden myself. Then I will let you know all about it, and there I will remain."

"Maime," said Osgood, in astonishment, "why do you talk like that? Is it not enough that I have found you to prove that I will not leave you? But we must get ourselves back to America, Maime."

Maime shook her head. "All he wants is father's property, and to keep me from Guy, Osgood, and —"

"The property!" exclaimed her brother, striking the table. "A happy thought, Maime! That money-loving wretch can have it, — yours and mine, too! I never thought of that."

"Never!" said Maime, fiercely interrupting him. "It may be ill-gotten, Osgood; but it shall go in a better cause than that! God helping me, I shall place my money where it will ransom our father's name before I die."

"Well, at least, Maime, don't let us run from him like cowards. He shall suffer well if he disturb you again." He drew her more closely to his breast. Her blue eyes turned lovingly to him, but she replied, —

"You're a dear good brother, Osgood; but you're very, very foolish about this. Of course we are not afraid of him. I really believe, if I tried hard, I could frighten that man all alone. But you forget he

is my husband, and has a right to me!" Her brother shuddered. "The only course lying open to me is to place myself beyond his reach if possible. That I must do. You must not go with me unless you wish, Osgood."

"Of course I go, Maime; but where?"

"We were thinking of that yesterday. A little steamer sails to-morrow for the Persian Gulf."

"The Persian Gulf, Maime! Have you lost your wits?"

"I think not, Osgood. It is beautiful sometimes. I could hardly expect to find it all of that, but certainly this is the best season of the year. The steamer to-morrow only goes to Bushire; but there we can take another steamer, if we wish, which will carry us as far as Bagdad."

"Bagdad! Bagdad! Bagdad!" Osgood Carleton repeated.

"You need not go unless you choose," said Maime, again. "But if you go, remember that I warned you, here, that neither upon this side of Bagdad nor on the other, nor yet in Bagdad, shall we find a place to hide long from him, till he becomes weary of following. I am ready to prophesy that before we reach Bagdad we shall meet him."

Dr. Carleton looked at the little figure in the old, wondering way. She had foretold the future. He felt it as emphatically as she.

"You will go, then, Osgood?" she asked; and, kissing her good-night, he answered, —

"Yes, Maime, we will go to Bagdad."

CHAPTER XXI.

AS the sun was setting, the bleached and rocky barrenness of the south coast of Persia offered its customary welcome to the little British government steamer from Aden. Bassadore lay forsaken and lonely on the little island of Kishm to the left; and far over the waters, where the pink and Tyrian cloud-mantle was gathering along the horizon, was the far-famed breakwater, built out into the sea to protect the thousands of curious craft that plied those waves, with which the Shirmal and the Sherki are ever wont to play. Beyond the breakwater, wrapped in the royal purple clouds, lay Linga, the great southern seaport town of Persia. All about Linga grew the date-palms; and down at the feet of Linga, lying on the leisurely tide, which is slower to ebb and flow at Linga than anywhere else in the world, little boats and larger vessels and great ships that go down into the sea sank out of sight as the sun went down. It was a mailing port; and Osgood Carleton, in passing aft, noticed the boatman, who had brought out the pilot, stop and take a letter from the hand of the maid who had been of so much assistance to his sister. He wondered to whom she was writing; but it mattered little, and a moment later he had for-

gotten the circumstance in watching the pearl-divers' boats that lay anchored along the way.

Then the moon came up out of the clouds that lay over Linga. The little steamer was nearer the shore now, and the orchards of almonds and oranges and the perfume of the pomegranates were easily distinguishable.

The steamer crept slowly through that forest of fishing craft lying off Linga, and morning found it still surrounded by the pearl dhows, with their African and Arab crews. One after another each of the six divers upon the dhows would draw up a heavy weight of hermatite, fastened by a strong cord to the oar-lock, and, grasping it in both hands, dive to the depth of twenty or thirty feet. Down in that marvellously clear water one could see even the expression of the face, when the diver worked, rapidly searching for shells, filling if possible the little wire basket which hung at his belt, before the pressure of the water became so intense as to warn him that a minute, his utmost limit, had elapsed.

Then, one after another, as they went down they all came up again, and, emptying their baskets, repeated the struggle till a generous pile was gathered. Then they lay in the torrid sunshine, languidly smoking, watching their companions at the opposite end of the boat open the shells, and test the favor of Allah in what he had sent them.

The passengers on the little steamer watched and marvelled as every stranger upon that wonderful sea watches and marvels. For year after year, age after

age, century after century, that multitude of divers has dripped with the waters of that bay. Century after century the shells have filled those little baskets and been destroyed, twenty at least for every pearl obtained; and yet to-day, just as in the days of Babylon and Nineveh, and the proudest days of Pompeii, the world receives all it demands from an apparently inexhaustible supply.

"Will it never fail?" asked Maime.

"I fancy not," replied the captain. "Last year three million dollars was realized as the first cost of the pearls which were exported."

But the perpetual pearl-divers were passed, and the steamer lay in the waveless waters of the Bushire bay. The regular steamer to the north would not leave for a week, but it mattered little. The week went by, and the maid was suddenly taken ill. Dr. Carleton had formed a strong dislike for this maid, who had followed Maime from the Stanley mansion; but Maime only laughed at his whims and, though he declared that there was nothing whatever the matter with the woman, Maime insisted upon yielding to her pitiful pleading that she should not be taken on board the steamer. They waited two weeks.

Bushire was an intolerably dull town at its best, and, without regret, brother and sister watched the high range of mountains, skirting the almost treeless plain, sink into the mists from which they came three weeks before, and the mud walls, and the ungainly wind-towers, and the miserable and low flat roofs, and the shoal harbor, full of dry flats when the tide was out, followed the mountains into the mists.

It was five hundred miles to Bagdad, — five hundred miles to the capital of that once great empire of the Caliphs, world-renowned for its wealth. Bagdad ! wrinkled and old and gray now. The muddy waters of the bubbling, brimming Tigris dashed against the steamer's side. Dr. Carleton and his sister and the maid were the only passengers. Freight is plenty, but tourists are few, to and from the old city of Bagdad. At last they entered the vast, sandy plain that surrounds the city, with hardly green enough to cover the river banks, and never a tree or a shrub broke the broad expanse. There was hardly a habitable dwelling in the miles that the eye could cover at a single glance, and only the wrecks and the ruins of glories of centuries gone broke the monotony of sand ; till, far away, like a speck on the horizon, lay the clouted relic that had once been the sandal and the crown of one of the greatest dynasties of the world. Old Bagdad of centuries and centuries ago was on the west bank of the river, and new Bagdad, a patriarch still among the cities of to-day, silently sat upon the east. Like a garden, overgrown with weeds, seemed this goal of the wanderers, as they looked at it from afar ; for, as if to compensate for the utter lack beyond, the marvellous hand of man has filled its courts and its open squares so full of nature's greenery that scarcely anything but the tree-tops and the evergreen foliage can be seen by one approaching on the Tigris.

The current was strong. The river was nearly at its height, and surged and rushed onward as if to

show what might be done if the treacherous water only chose. The heavily freighted steamer found progress difficult. She was not so stanch as the vessels that plied the gulf. The water was still rising, and soon must overflow the banks and cover the immense desert. Its force would then be decreased. There was no haste except for the three passengers; and, rather than risk his steamer in the current, the captain announced his intention to moor upon the west bank and wait for one day, or two or three, till the water should cover the plain.

The sun set and the moon rose over the waste, and Bagdad old and new was lost in night.

The captain informed Dr. Carleton that he should send despatches on to the city by messenger at once, and that, if his party wished to accompany him, he would secure mules for the whole. The prospect was rather attractive, and they rode away in high spirits. Both Maime and her brother were beginning to enjoy life again.

The light of Asia is strangely soft and white at night, especially where it falls upon the heart of Persia. The mules glided on like phantoms, guided by the silent muleteers, almost as naked as the occupants of that first garden, on the neighboring Euphrates, before they transgressed. But the moon was sinking very low, and they were yet several miles, at least, from the city. The last lingering rays touched the broken masses of the ruins and the sand-shrouded wrecks with a weird and mystic halo. The shadows grew blacker, creeping onward almost im-

perceptibly till all was lost in night. Dr. Carleton looked anxiously forward, regretful that he had not thought of this, and waited. The Arabs who had been so silently creeping on behind the mules now began to mutter a guttural chant. The romance died away. The mules with difficulty kept the path, stumbling over rocks and striking the ruins.

The Arabs sang louder, sometimes shouting as they went, and discordant echoes came back from every direction.

A night-bird screamed, and then a low whistle sounded far before them.

"It must be that shriek was some Oriental omen," Dr. Carleton said to his sister; for, upon hearing it, one of the Arabs gave a shrill cry, three times repeated, and then all were absolutely still. Their chanting ceased, and not a sound broke the silence and the night.

In the east a faint line of gray appeared, and grew rapidly broader. Morning is not slow to break when once the sun begins to rise over that plain of Bagdad.

The messenger from the steamer was far in advance. The other three were close together, silently moving on, when suddenly the muleteers turned upon the mules and stopped them. Then men rose up out of the earth about them; and before Dr. Carleton could lift a hand to defend himself he was dragged from his mule, and lay bound upon his back.

He struggled and fought desperately, but it was too late. Maime cried for help. Her voice sounded far away. In the agony of the moment he tested

the iron muscles of his arms, and burst the withs. He struggled to his feet, when a heavy blow fell upon his head. A thousand meteors darted before his eyes, and then left him in utter night.

He reeled, he gasped for breath, he fell senseless upon the ground.

CHAPTER XXII.

SLOWLY recovering consciousness, he thought it a fall from a tree, that had stunned him when a boy. Then it seemed the death-stupor following the wound upon the battle-field; then the long, unconsciousness coming with the fever which followed it. The ropes that bound him proved a final reminder.

All was damp and dark about him, but it was a gray dark, — not the blackness of night. He spoke. His voice was husky and faint, and a hollow, muffled echo betrayed the existence of naked walls close about him. Slowly and patiently enduring the tortures which each movement caused him, he worked upon the ropes till he had unbound them. Then, to his surprise, he discovered that he had not been robbed. Some other motive had instigated the attack. It at least aroused a hope that Maime had been more gently dealt with. Tediously moving, he managed to creep across the floor. The cell was not large, but of solid stone. He sought in vain for a door, or for some crack through which the gray light entered. It was not light enough to see anything, but surely it was not dark. He lay down again, utterly exhausted. Then, to his horror, he discovered that his heart was scarcely perceptibly beating.

Sinking upon the cold floor, he laid his finger on his pulse and waited. What was he waiting for? He smiled, and gave the utmost attention. It was an interesting investigation, and with flutter and flush the pulsations increased and then fell off again. His mind was clear. He tested it with abstruse mathematical propositions. It was normal, and not even nervously active. Mentally he was as much a man as ever in his life. He tested every sense, and found it ready with accurate response, excepting only the sense of taste and possibly of sight. He felt no hunger, and was sensible of no thirst. He seemed as one in the mental, standing over himself in the physical, to see himself die. He noted with interested accuracy every irregularity and peculiarity as the heart was surely sinking away with the body. In the ideal he was so different from himself in the real that he said aloud, fully believing he was speaking of a patient to anxious friends: "Yes, he is certainly failing. I see no cause for it. There is no disease. It may be poison. It may be — Yes. The heart seems to be wilfully ceasing its beating. Perhaps the machinery has run down. It does sometimes. His breathing is labored. The pressure is heavy upon his head. It begins to seem more like suffocation. Is the air pure? No! It is vile! It is poisonous! Good God! why did that not appear before? We might have saved him. He is smothering in the confined gases of this hole in the ground. For hours they have been stupefying him, — laying their relentless grip upon the fountain-head of life. Why has

no one noticed that this room was rank with poison? Ah, yes, I see. It is hardly perceptible, but it is subtle and fatal. I know, I know why it is that you have not noticed it. I see how it is that the poor fellow lies so low. He gasps for breath! He will soon be unconscious! He will linger in that state for an hour or two. Possibly, if you could bring him pure air, like water, in your hat, he would revive again, as the wounded soldiers used to. If you could only carry him into the fresh air, you could save his life. But when he sleeps, it will be too late to think of waking him. Even if you roused him, he would not get over this. No. If he sleep before you find a way to rescue him, let him sleep on. What! Do I hear a bell tolling? Let it toll! 'Tis tolling for the dead, an hour or two, only before the corpse is cold. No, it is not a bell; it is an organ playing. 'Tis playing a requiem. Let it play on. He will be ready for it before the music ceases. What! Not an organ, but a voice, singing, singing his funeral hymn? No, no; that is impossible! Human hearts are not so hard as that. Tell them to wait. Tell them to wait less than half an hour. Hark! Great heavens, I hear the voice! 'Tis singing something that I well remember, — something Kittie Cosgrove sang the first time I saw her. I crept along that shaded path. I saw the branches bowing, and the fern leaves nodding in the breeze; and then I heard her singing. Yes, that is what she was singing. I was a boy then; it was two hundred and forty years ago, but that is the same old song. It makes me

feel young again. It has rung in my heart from that day to this. I'll join in the chorus this time. I longed to then, and have ever since, and never dared. But I'm lawless now—I'm dead! Come, Kittie, come. I was foolish then and false; but now, beyond the grave, I know that you are all in all to me. Sing it again, and I will join. It shall be our marriage hymn, not for time, but for all eternity. I hear it!—yes, yes. Listen! There it comes! Now! I'll howl it loud enough to send an echo back through all the years of silence. Just two strains more. A pause! Now for it!"

In a long, piercing shriek that shot through the solid walls, Dr. Carleton did what he supposed was joining in the chorus; but he had discussed his own case with a painful accuracy of detail. The breath that had been almost spent before, died out in that one long note. No more. He could not go on with the chorus. He opened his eyes for a moment, and struggled to look about him. He had partially roused himself in the exertion. While he was thus waiting, a loud knocking sounded from somewhere. He shouted, "Come in!" and wondered who was there and where "there" was.

"I am coming," replied a voice; and suddenly, with a crash, a light streamed in upon him. He shrank back against the stone wall, trying to comprehend whether he were ill or whether he were in trouble and help had reached him.

"Where are you?" asked a voice, so soft and gentle that for a moment he thought he must have passed

the bound, and be upon the threshold of another world. The words were in English, but there was a strange and melodious intonation from the South and the Orient combined; not like a rude dialect, not broken and erroneous, but exquisite beyond description.

"Here," he replied faintly, struggling to lift himself from the floor; and, guided by his voice, the questioner reached him, and laid a warm hand upon his head.

"Come with me," the voice said, "it is death to remain in here." And, without a word, leaning heavily upon the proffered shoulder, Osgood Carleton very slowly crept toward the light, and at last was dragged through a narrow aperture; then they passed down a long, winding gallery, and out into the sunlight that streamed over him with such terrific brilliancy that through his closed eyelids it sent the most intense agony over his entire body. He realized that by urging and dragging him his guide forced him to reach the shadow of the walls under which he had been confined. Then he fell helpless upon his face and slept.

When he awoke the light was not so painful. Evidently the sun hung near the horizon. His mind was clouded, but he was conscious and was much refreshed. He had been given liquor to drink while he slept. His lips were even then wet with it. He remembered all, but indistinctly, and thought of the past and of Maime with almost indifference. He turned his head, and sought the one who had saved

him. At a little distance he saw the figure of a man, and recognized it instantly. A slender, graceful youth, not over five-and-twenty years at most, dressed in a Turkish costume of such exquisite texture as indicated one of high rank and nobility. Black, curling hair burst profusely from under the red fez, above a peculiarly Oriental face, and the dark, almost Hindu skin was deepened by the rich flush that overspread the cheeks. The coal-black eyes were alive with fire, and flashed as the young man bent eagerly over his work. Upon a light easel before him lay a canvas, on which he was sketching in the brilliant colors of the bold and fascinating Persian art. The glowing sky, the cold, gray ruin, were the subject. Upon the canvas they stood out as in reality. Dr. Carleton would have fain let him paint on. It seemed cruel to break the charm which held those fiery eyes of the Orient. The very slight motion he had made, however, had warned the artist; and in the same melodious voice, only more full and deep than it had sounded in the vault, he asked, —

“Are you strengthened by your sleep?”

What a charm of accent a tinge of the Orient adds to our rough Occidental languages! Dr. Carleton would rather have listened longer than to have heard his own voice in reply; so, making his answer as brief as possible, and rising, not without difficulty, he walked towards the easel. It was a wonderful picture.

“You paint like a master,” Dr. Carleton observed, as the artist paid him no further attention.

"A very little master," replied the artist, bending over the sketch. "The pictures bring me good prices in Europe. That is the best that one can praise them justly, and that is more because I studied art there, and made many good friends there than because of any merit."

"Nevertheless, they have merit. What is this that you are painting?" the doctor added, looking at the tomb.

The artist smiled. "You do not like it? No. I do not wonder. Yet it is really wonderful outside, and beautiful against the sky, if one knows nothing of the vault below. It is so with everything. Is it not? But this in particular is the magnificent tomb of Zobeide, the favorite wife of the great Haroun El Raschid. It is of peculiar interest to me just now; for I am painting this for my sister, who was named for Zobeide."

"And her brother's name is?" Dr. Carleton asked, sitting upon the ground. The stupor from the poisoning had not yet fully worn away.

"It is such a long name — so very long — that I never yet saw the Englishman who could master the whole of it," replied the artist, still working upon the glow that now deepened in the western sky. "But we in the Orient have an almost interminable list of names given us by admiring relatives, and then we are never expected to be called by any of them. Something or other always winds itself into our lives to give us a name before long. One of my names was given for the great sage, Ardavan; and it came

so much easier than the rest to my English friends that they all called me Ardavan. I am no sage, I assure you ; but, in spite of the incongruity, I have at last become so used to it that I almost like to hear myself called Ardavan."

"It is very musical when compared with mine, which is Carleton, Osgood Carleton, and nothing more. I am an American. A short time before I left home, I received the degree of doctor of medicine, and am quite well aware that you have saved my life, though I have not yet thanked you."

"Never mind it now. You must go to my home, and eat salt with me. Then there will be no need of expressing gratitude between us. It was only an accident that I did it, at the best. I was singing one of our old songs of the Tigris, when I heard a cry that seemed to come from the ruin. My servants fled. These fellows are terrible cowards when they think there may be a spirit about. But for my part, though I fully believe in the presence of spirits, I have never yet met with one, and am rather anxious than otherwise to have the truth verified. So I went into the tomb without stopping to wonder what I should find there ; but fortunately it was not a spirit."

"You were singing a song of the Tigris, you said? Will you sing it again?" asked Dr. Carleton, nervously, as he now recalled the song he heard.

Ardavan laughed, a clear, musical ripple, an Oriental laugh, and replied : "I'll sing it to-night by my harp, if you wish ; but you look as sober as though you thought it a funeral dirge. It is very pretty, I

assure you. I translated a verse into English some time ago, and was singing it in English when I heard you. Listen." He sang:—

"How oft within yon vacant shade
Has evening met my rhapsody!
How oft along those banks I've strayed
And watched the wave that wandered by.
Oh, long thy loss shall I bewail!
Farewell, farewell, my Tigris vale!

"You look disappointed. Is it not pretty?" he asked.

"It is, indeed," said Dr. Carleton. "But in my stupor I thought it was a song I once heard in America. Something I cannot easily forget. It brought me back to life again, the very thought that I heard it. But for that I should have lain there, and died without a struggle."

"I'll venture this picture that it was a lady who sang it," said Ardavan, carelessly bending over the canvas to put a last touch somewhere.

"Hardly a lady, only a little girl," replied Dr. Carleton, seriously.

"And still the American doctor loves her," Ardavan added, smiling as he laid the sketch in the case, so that the fresh paint should not be injured.

"I loved her once," Dr. Carleton replied, thoughtfully.

"I loved her once?" Ardavan slowly repeated, and his thin lips curved in that peculiar Oriental expression of doubt and incomprehensibility. And there in the desert of Bagdad it was revealed to Os-

good Carleton that in the past and to-day he had and did love Kittie Cosgrove. But, alas! the inexorable tyranny demands more than that, before the one, the only one, shall be a joy forever in the home. Dr. Carleton would have been astounded had even Guy Underwood told him that; but, in truth, he had more to learn. What had the others been to him? He did not know. Some element in each had perhaps possessed her shadow. But which of them could have called him back to life again? They had faded in time, while she had grown dearer in memory.

"Yes," he replied a little later, "I do love her."

"And always will? Just that, no more?" The artist was still smiling.

"How can I tell the future?" Dr. Carleton asked, doubtfully.

Ardavan closed his sketching case with a resounding click, called his servants, assisted Dr. Carleton to enter his palanquin in spite of all protestations, and walked beside it, explaining the way as they approached and entered Bagdad.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE young artist, being much the more familiar with those tomb-brewed poisons, knew better than Dr. Carleton the great demand for absolute quiet and rest through the reaction ; and thus, in his quaint style and Oriental accent, which to his listener were thoroughly enchanting, he persistently prevented him from speaking, giving him only an occasional opportunity for the briefest reply, and even prevented his thinking of anything but the ancient relics and occasional wonders around them. The stupor that yet hung about the rescued man aided the Persian artist materially in this endeavor, entirely concealing the energy with which he deftly turned the thoughts of his companion toward new subjects of interest and away from that which, though only like a dream, was yet nearest to his heart.

Said Ardavan, as they started, " We are now passing through a vast cemetery. The burial-place in itself is very old, and these ruins that now and then rise higher than the graves and the tombstones, are of a city that is almost incalculably older yet. In the grandest days of Bagdad, this was her grandest quarter ; but, as her sceptre of living greatness fell gradually away, these monuments of the grandeur that was dead encroached. Now the mightier of the

two has entirely uprooted all but the sand-clogged shadow of the other. The palace of Haroun El Raschid was the most magnificent of all palaces ; near it he erected the tomb of his favorite Zobeide. Now the palace is past and forgotten. Men wrangle and dispute even over its exact location. But the great octangular brick mausoleum, surmounted by its lofty superstructure in the form of couc, remains. It is an excellent prison, too, you will at least admit. A thousand years have tested both, and found the tomb the stronger to endure. Now we are approaching the old city that lies upon the west bank of the Tigris. It has dwindled away in size as the new city over the river there has superseded it, till now the new is three times the size of the old. Look yonder ! There is the only bridge connecting the two, resting on thirty great pontoons. They shiver and swing under the heavy bridge with a fearful motion when the Tigris rises with the rains. Some day, when the pressure is poured upon them with a little unusual vehemence, they will break from their moorings, and mount the flood as if it were a chariot to bear them away to the Persian Gulf. The city will not move until the bridge is gone ; then the people of Bagdad will cross in boats, if they must needs cross at all, until in the slow process of tedious time another pontoon bridge will be completed to take its place. You cannot imagine how very slowly men without energy do a task that is allotted them. Bagdad is dead. The people stifle and suffocate in the foul air of inanity, just as the American doctor yielded to the

robe of poisons that Zobeide's sleeping Zenana secretly swaddled about him. We shall cross the bridge presently, for the freshest and fairest homes are over the river. But by far the finest streets are upon this side. The people of to-day seem to consider these vast, useless, and uninhabited plains too valuable to spread their homes and stretch their streets upon. They have huddled their houses together till two horsemen cannot pass in the narrow ways between them. They have built up into the air till the sun is lost long before it reaches the miserable, unpaved passages. When we have crossed the bridge you shall see for yourself, and I warn you you will shiver with disappointment and dread. There is no prospect or pleasure to be derived from an outlook upon the filthy streets, and therefore they have none. The doors are miserable, mean, and low, and there are no windows. The bare, unbroken walls, dingy and dusty, rise like the rocky ridges of the deep chasms of the Himalayas. But you must not allow the disappointment to depress the power of appreciation, for each of those houses is built about an immense court. The Europeans (and I fancy the Americans, too) make their homes beautiful for the stranger who is passing. The people of Bagdad adorn theirs for themselves alone. In the romances of Saladin you will not find a fancy to exceed the lovely facts of some of these fair courts. See! We enter the old city. There are but three gates in this massive wall that surrounds its almost worthless contents. Two turn toward Hillah on the Euphrates,

and one toward Kazimeen. Look at the circular towers upon the angles, and the smaller towers between them! They are architectural gems such as are rarely produced to-day, even in Europe. Each of those towers is mounted with brass cannon. Think of it! There is not value enough in the entire city to pay for the batteries that protect it. And yet the new city is surrounded just the same. There is only this difference: the oldest wall is in the finest state of preservation, and those parts that were built last may be discovered by the most evident signs of weakness and decay. The work of the men who died two thousand years ago is more substantial to-day than the labor of hands that are not yet cold."

They were passing under the great Saracenic arch of the gate that faced Kazimeen, and Ardavan paused to look admiringly at the substantial architecture, yet retaining much of its pristine beauty as well as its pristine strength. Dr. Carleton's eyes followed those of the artist. Then, taking advantage of the pause, he was about to speak; indeed, he had begun to ask a question relative to his present position and necessities, when Ardavan continued, —

"Yes, now we are in Bagdad! Many and many a person comes to Bagdad seeking rest. Its very name signifies that it is a home for the weary; but many and many a desperate one only finds himself disappointed. It always makes me gloomy to enter Bagdad. I love to get beyond its walls. I go out early and come back late. I am an artist of necessity. It is the only occupation that could employ my time,

and keep me beyond these terrible streets. They are much wider here in the old city than over there in the new, and the shops are in the lower stories of the houses instead of being crowded into the open squares. Yet, dread it as I do, I cling to Bagdad as to a straw floating in the river. I hate the world more than I hate this gloom. And yet I find that Bagdad is not entirely out of the world. The great fish of the sea find the free ocean too confined for them, and ruffle the little rivers with their finny flutterings. I sometimes go out of the new city, but the ways are not so wild and the ruins not so real as those through which we have been passing. Though the wall of the new city is five miles in length, the attractions are so few and the caravan routes so unimportant that that too has but three gates. They are more magnificent in pretensions than these, but more poverty-stricken in appearance. There was once a fourth gate in the new wall; but, when the Sultan Amurath took the city in 1638, he signalled his victory by closing the great gate through which he had entered. And in all these years that have followed there has not been found in Bagdad the energy to open it. It is the most wonderful Saracenic arch I ever saw; and, long ago, when it was the grand highway to Damascus, it was called the 'White Gate'; for, as one came over the desert, in the reflection of the sun and the sand it shone as though coated with the hoar-frost of the North. But now 't is called 'Bab-el-Tilism,' from a scroll that the conqueror had carved upon its surface to warn approachers from the Damascus

draws that a new era and a new regimen regulated the customs of Bagdad. They call it the 'Talismanic Gate,' and tremble each time that they speak the name."

They were crossing the pontoon bridge, and again the voice of the speaker was silenced by the glory of the scene. Beneath them the turbid water surged, and the bridge swayed with its motion. Banks of clouds lay in the west. The horizon beneath them was a brilliant red. Desert and cloud seemed drifting together, and into both the fierce sun was sinking. The river caught the crimson coloring, and its ripples seemed tinged with blood. The old city behind them was blotted out by the brilliant glare, and the new city before them was transformed till it trembled with the touch of fire, and seemed something celestial in the mystery of that magnificent sunset.

"Look!" said Ardavan, pointing in rapture to the strangely translated mass. "See how the red and yellow brick, in their peculiar tints, take in the setting sun! Ah, how the picture haunts me day and night! Perchance I may yet be inspired to paint it. Many and many a time have I seen it, yet each new time it seems as though I had never looked at such magnificence before. But come, we must hurry on! For if darkness overtake us in that labyrinth of miserable and twisting streets, we shall lose our way a dozen times before even these catlike servants of mine can find the low door that will welcome us to my little home. How the narrow and high domes of the Mohammedan mosques glow in that reflected

glory ! I would I were Mussulman, true as a Moslem should be, to mind the muzzein's call from yonder minarets. Listen ! How it reverberates as it rings from the throats of the time-trained criers, 'La illa il ulla Mahamoud rusol il ulla !' Millions upon millions of true souls are falling prostrate now to the good God and his Prophet. But I am no Mohammedan. The great philosopher Ardavan was a worshipper of the sun ; and when I found that in faithless ignorance I was falling on my face toward Mecca, I prostrated myself instead to the great God of Day. But he shone too fiercely at noon, and he left me alone at night. I could not worship him. But take your last look from the bridge. We shall soon be in the dim twilight beyond. See the little steamer yonder turning from the wharf. There are only three steamers upon the Tigris now. The Turks put on a line a few years ago, but they had not the energy required to succeed against an English opposition. There, up the river, is the famous Serau. It is a most ungainly mass, yet it is the palace of the pasha. Oh, heavens ! How the Caliphs would have groaned to have been placed in such a horrible retreat and told that it was home. But there is not in all Bagdad a relic left of the magnificence that belonged to the Caliphs. These curiously tinted brick, of which the city before us is built (look ! before the sun goes down, you can see how their edges are rounded and worn away), were once a part of that glory. The people who built this new Bagdad were already too dead to turn a hand to help themselves, but must

steal their material for these horribly angular houses from the glorious relics of the past, though to do so they carried away the last atom of beauty, to remould it into these unartistic angles. And now, because even the evidences of the first of their own creed are gone, these mangling Mohammedans glory in Bagdad as a creation of the followers of the Prophet, and say exultantly, 'Look, what a city the Faithful have founded!' But, mark you, American doctor, here is a discovery that I have made. Upon yonder bank, under the low-water mark of the all-hiding river, there is a buttress more substantial even than the tombs in the ancient cemetery. The wall is of bricks that are larger than any to be found in the city, cemented together till they are more solid and stronger than iron; and every brick bears the name and the titles of Nebuchadnezzar; finding this I sought the old Assyrian geographical catalogues of the days of Sardanapalus, and there, as I almost expected, discovered the ancient name 'Bagdad' among the Babylonian cities. And now look back across the river. The sun is so low that you can see the buildings again. The most important of them all, there under the purple cloud that seems almost to rest upon it, is the famed shrine of the Baktash dervishes, bearing an elaborate Cufic inscription, dated 944, according to your Christian way of telling the years. And now we shall dive into the city's gloom. I must walk behind the palanquin, for there is not room for us to move side by side. But you will miss nothing. There is absolutely nothing to be seen."

Suiting his action to his words, the dark-skinned artist fell behind. But being out of sight was not for him to be out of mind. In their long and slow progress together, Osgood Carleton had hardly found an opportunity to speak a word, much less more than one word at a time. He could not but realize that it was an evident design of Ardavan's that he should not speak. He had exhausted every means to render it impossible. He had not even asked him how he came to be in the tomb. He had not allowed him to render any explanation. He had so successfully endeavored to avoid the subject as to cause the sufferer even to forget at times that he was not a guest of the artist, and in the interest of a long friendship being shown the wonders of the city. He had noticed that the voice of his guide trembled now and then, and how strong the temptation had seemed to be to moralize and wander from the scenes before him; as though, after all, his heart were not with them. It had been an exertion for him to continue the conversation as he had. Why had he done it? Then suddenly recalling the painful reality which placed him there, upon the impulse of the moment he leaned from his palanquin to ask some question of Ardavan that should give him hope of finding his sister. The streets were already dark, but there was still light enough for him to discern beyond a doubt that he was alone. Ardavan was not behind him. He spoke sharply to the men who carried the palanquin. They did not even notice him at first, and when he attempted to alight they only looked

surprised, and spoke in a tongue that had no meaning to him. Seeing the uselessness of endeavoring to extricate himself in such a labyrinth as had been described to him, he sank back again into the palanquin to let them carry him where they would, uncertain whether it were really another mesh of mystery, or whether Ardavan might not after all have simply stopped for a moment and would soon again overtake him. The servants moved on, and the streets became darker.

Suddenly the motion of the palanquin was stopped. The men who carried it relieved themselves of their burden, and laid it upon the ground. Dr. Carleton alighted. The place was pitchy dark. A faint light shone in a low doorway. A weird-looking Persian was holding it. The Persian motioned him to enter. He refused. Yet why should he? Had not Ardavan told him that all the doorways were very low and mean? Might it not, after all, be the one he had assured him would make him tremble, but lead him in the end to his little home? It was an awkward thing to stand thus refusing the common hospitality of a man who had saved his life, and brought him beneath his own roof.

Upon second thought, and especially urged by the conviction that he could not be worse off than he was, and very faint and hungry withal, he followed the ugly specimen of humanity holding the little lamp, and crept up a narrow flight of stairs. Trembling and shuddering, he went down a long corridor. There was not sufficient light for him to discover even

the composition of the walls so close upon either side. Nothing was visible but the ghostly outline of the hag who led the way. Her shadow covered him. It seemed like a cold sheet thrown around him; and yet to her he had trusted everything, and he had no mind now to beat retreat.

The gallery came to an end at length, and a door was opened. The tottering woman stood one side, and motioned him to enter. The room was somewhat lighter than the hall, and apparently as vacant. He entered. The woman closed the door behind him, and went away. He shuddered when left alone, and suddenly realized that, ugly as she was, the old hag was after all desirable company. His first instinct was to turn again and follow her, and grasp the gaunt and bony hand that haunted him as he still saw it beckoning to him at the door below. He would now have clung to it. But he had not waited long in uncertainty when he was startled by a soft step upon the floor, and the rustle of drapery. An instant more, and two arms were thrown eagerly about his neck, and, sobbing and laughing, Maime whispered, "O Osgood, my Osgood! He promised to bring you —"

CHAPTER XXIV.

NOT another word had been spoken when the withered hag appeared again, and handed a dainty little note to Dr. Carleton. The handwriting was exquisite, yet unlike that of an American. Like the tongue of Ardavan, it was tinged with the languor and luxury of the East. Dr. Carleton knew from whom it came before he had read the simple signature.

TO THE AMERICAN DOCTOR, — I am risking much in this, and you are risking even more. For your own sake and your sister's and mine, you must trust and obey me implicitly, or the hope I have that all will be well will prove false. You have seen her. You know that she is safe. Let that be sufficient. I cannot explain to you the danger now. I myself imperfectly understand it. But follow the bearer, and leave your sister without a moment's delay. Let me charge you both emphatically not under any circumstances, not to a living soul, not even to me if you are all alone with me, or to the lady's maid, admit or intimate that this meeting has taken place, or that the American doctor is still alive.

Your friend, as I trust you will by and by discover,

ARDAVAN.

"I think I understand it already," said Maime, and her voice trembled. "Go, Osgood! We can trust implicitly. We shall meet again."

One short embrace, and they parted. Dr. Carleton followed the weird guide, who walked much faster now, and soon had ushered him into a quaintly gorgeous room, that could be no other than the dark-skinned artist's studio. Four bronze lamps of antique mould were swinging in slow and irregular rotation from long bronze chains, suspended by curious bronze dragons clinging to the ceiling, and kept in perpetual motion by a gentle breeze that swept the heavy curtains from four long windows, just far enough to make a passage for itself. The flames in the vases of oil flickered and smoked when they swung against the breeze to gain another impetus. But there was no odor from the smoking lamps. A gold bronze censer standing in the distant corner, in which a low fire was smouldering, filled the room with the most exquisite of Oriental perfumes; and the breeze, as it came through the court without, was burdened by the flowering tamarind and pomegranate and the luxurious tropical garden that flourished under their branches. The ceilings were decorated in the popular Persian style, with the heavy, open, checkered work, so subtly effective. There were strange relics of the lost, almost forgotten ages, all about the room, — talismans in richly decorated and curiously lettered bands of cloth affixed to the furniture and drapery, like the phylacteries of the Jews. There were amulets such as are worn about the limbs as protection against diseases, set with

precious stones, and engraved like the images of the divinities and genii, with inscriptions upon them. There were tiny statuettes in biscuit pottery ; images of Bel, with a tiara ornamented with many rows of bull's horns ; Nergal, with a lion's head ; Nebo bearing a sceptre. A curious statuette of Assyrian workmanship attracted his attention. It was the figure of a dreaded demon. Its head was a skeleton, only half decayed, with the eyes still glaring in their sunken sockets ; its body that of a dog, the feet of an eagle, the claws of a lion, the tail of a scorpion. The skeleton head was surmounted by hooked ram's horns, and the body borne upon wide-spread wings. It stood facing such an altar of elaborate modelling as any god but Him who sees the sparrow fall might be well pleased to recognize as a place of propitiation. It was just beneath the lamp that swung before the largest window of the room ; and, recalling the mimicry of Chaldean mysteries, Dr. Carleton recognized in the figure the hideous god of the Sherki the hot wind that scorches all the region of the Euphrates when the thermometer stands at 120° Fahrenheit.

Upon an easel at the farther end of the room rested a large, unfinished canvas, but the details were complete ; and in that strange fascination that binds the very soul before the mysterious and the great in art, Dr. Carleton crept nearer and nearer, unable to take his eyes from the canvas, as though bound by it in some magic spell. Before a low mound of grass and a modest and low monument there

knelt an angel of transcendental beauty, and from a pearly shell she was pouring water, sparkling and pure, into the snow-white bowl of a lily. In silent rapture Dr. Carleton stood before the picture. An almost inaudible footfall on the yielding Persian rug attracted his excited attention, and, looking up, he beheld the graceful and talented Ardavan, dressed in a gorgeous evening costume, standing close beside him. One delicate and shapely hand rested lightly upon a diamond-studded dagger in his girdle, and the other was lifting to his proudly curving lips one of those passionately fragrant cigarettes which the Orientals delight in slowly smoking.

Ardavan laughed. It jarred cruelly on the tender enthusiasm and adoration that thrilled in the veins of his guest. He evidently realized it, but he only laughed again. He scorned emotion. Then with a sudden turn he threw a curtain over the painting, remarking indifferently, "It is not completed yet. Reserve your criticism, and look at this which is more nearly finished. I told you how faithless I was, but, instead of believing anything in particular, you can see that I believe a little of everything. Here is a sort of religious enthusiasm that was instilled into these poor veins of mine by the study of Nebuchadnezzarian theology. See! Izdubar and his friend Heabani are fighting with the bull that was created by Anu at the command of Ishtar, his mistress, to avenge herself upon Erech. I am not sure that it was not the theology of humanity instead of Nebuchadnezzar that inspired me, after all. Did you never

know men giving themselves to that terrible mistress, Avarice, and creating tortures almost unimaginable, grim gods to work mischief against their fellows, simply because they were possessed of something that offended the covetous?"

"I have indeed," said Osgood Carleton, as the image of Sir Edgar Stanley rose with startling vividness before him. "I know —"

Scarcely seeming to interrupt him, and yet evidently because he would hear no more, Ardavan spoke again, with a melodious, rippling, and yet almost inaudible laugh: "Yes, yes. Every one knows of such cases, I fancy. All over the world, deny it who may, people believe in the mysterious, evil eye, and the power of its possessor, who, by some sort of right or rhythm, constrains even the gods and Fate to do his service. Your own King Solomon believed it when he moaned that all the workers of iniquity flourished. From the Temple of Belus to the mountains of Moab, from the steppes of Tartary to the forests of Gaul, from the pole to the tropic, and the tropic to the antipodal ice, diabolical lore is not without its ardent devotee, whose success astonishes conviction. It is sustained in honor and dignity by the pettiest of the people, and is the policy of the princes. It numbers our priests and our prophets, and lurks in our cottages and our courts. It directs in war and it rules in peace. It establishes monarchies and dethrones dynasties. But nowhere is its sting so bitter as when its fangs are buried in our homes."

Dr. Carleton shuddered, as he thought how fear-

fully this fact had been verified for him. Ardavan's dark eyes noted it, but carelessly he continued: "Yes, you think so, and I agree with you. But you will laugh at the way I take to avoid the presence of evil here. See those little vases under each window. They were upon the holy Acadian altars once. The great philosopher whose name was given to me was a worshipper of the sun. The Acadians carried that worship to its greatest perfection, according to his acceptance; and, borrowing from him the mode of protection and from them the means, I keep sweet-scented food in those sacred vases for the gods that love me to absorb in the warmth of the sun's rays. And if the gods that love me are near and happy in my home, I have a sort of confidence that evil spirits, whether such as take possession of my heart or hand, to do me wrong or tempt me to injure my neighbor, will fly away."

"Be it heathen or Christian, that is a lovely thought," said Dr. Carleton. "I wish that—"

"Look at all these ugly gods and hideous idols that fill the room. One would think that a sensitive soul would be frozen to death in such an atmosphere; and yet I love them, even while I often mourn that my soul is so sensitive that it will never cease smarting," said Ardavan with such gentle audacity that Dr. Carleton scarcely realized that he had left anything unsaid. "Do you remember the force of the Mars and Hercules, borrowed from the Greeks by the dwellers upon the Tigris and Euphrates? They are the same as the Assyrian Adar and Nergal, and the

Acadian Nindar and Nirgal. I have a very costly seal, brought from the ruins of Babylon, with the image of one god upon one side and the other on the other. I never write a letter without protecting it with the mark of one of those potent powers. But come ! I have been testing your good-nature terribly. Our table must be spread with food. Let us first eat salt together, and then what you would call our — supper, I suppose. Am I not right in the name ? We cannot call it tea, as the English do, for it is always coffee here in Bagdad."

While he was talking, Ardavan had touched a bell ; and, opposite the window, there rose slowly out of the floor, as if by its own volition, a table spread with a feast that was intended to meet the utmost requirements of hunger and fastidiousness.

Dr. Carleton was growing desperate. If his forced silence lasted much longer, he felt it would drive him mad. Ardavan motioned him behind a richly decorated screen, where, in all Oriental magnificence, was arranged every preparation for the most elaborate toilet. He was longer than necessary in the little that he was able to do to make himself ready for that sumptuous feast ; for he was vainly endeavoring to form some fashion of approach to the subjects that had gathered with every new development, and that seemed to demand some nearer acquaintance and some plainer acknowledgment to this incomprehensible man. But he came from behind the screen as undecided and as desperate as when he disappeared.

Before they sat down Ardavan sprinkled salt upon a piece of bread, and, breaking it, handed the half to his guest. Then he poured out two tiny glasses of sparkling blood-red wine. They ate the bread together, and, as Dr. Carleton raised the glass to his lips, he said earnestly, "God bless you, Ardavan! I shall strive in some way to return this kindness."

"Return it by dealing justly with the weak," said Ardavan, solemnly, raising his glass.

"But for this great —" the doctor began.

"Be seated," said Ardavan, motioning him to a chair by the table, — an English chair, — while he threw himself upon a cushioned divan, opposite, that was much more in accordance with the grace and languor and artistic beauty of every motion and even every fold of his magnificent costume.

"Look!" he said, pointing a jewelled finger toward a horrible bronze group that graced the centre of the table. "The forefathers of that land which you call Christendom — as though you thought it the only Christ-dom in the world — used to have, at their feasts, a skeleton, we are told, to be unveiled occasionally to frighten them with the thought that they were mortal. Their nearest neighbors were wont to hang a sword by a silken cord above their heads, in imitation of their old philosopher and leader, to startle themselves continually with the thought that they must die. I am no philosopher, though I am Ardavan; but I have often thought that, if I lived as a man should live, I was best fitted to die as a man should die. I would rather be reminded that

I must live well than to be constantly thinking that I must die well ; but you see I borrowed the idea from them, after all, and I believe in those ancestors of Christendom, and in Christ and in the Christian God just as I believe in Allah and Mohammed and Gautama and Brahma. The Great Being above us has made Himself, as did his priest in Syria, all things to all men. His only-begotten and incarnate Rule of Right came to the Arab, the Hindu, and the Syrian, the same and only-begotten, but translated into different languages, such as different people were best prepared to understand. This curious group I found in the land where the great men teach the people that they must all go down into Ker-netter, and there be judged by Osiris and his forty-two deputies. These here are the dual Horus and Anudis, holding the fatal scales, and Thor at their feet to register the weighing. That object in the tray next you is supposed to be the heart of the dead, or, according to your Christian creed, his soul, while in the other tray are his good deeds. The theory is, you see, that if the good deeds be less in weight than the soul, they rise in the balance, and the soul sinks to the eternal tortures of Smu. But if they be heavy, they will lift it forever out of the reach of the tormentor."

Thus the artist Ardavan prevented his friend from uttering more than single exclamations till the evening meal was finished. As they rose from the table he carelessly remarked, "I am expecting a call to-morrow, from an Englishman of wealth, who is coming to inspect my pictures. Perhaps he will purchase

some of them. He is a nobleman, Sir Edgar Stanley. You shall meet him, and tell me what you think of him."

Dr. Carleton staggered. He grasped the table to support himself, and blankly looked at Ardavan.

"Ah!" said the artist smiling, "you have met him before. You know him? Yes. And you think of him precisely as I do already. But his gold is as good as any. The Christians would say so; and therein I agree with them, and not with either Hindu or Mohammedan, who will not even touch polluted wealth. In case he may wish to purchase my pictures, I shall gladly sell them to him. But you? You have nothing to gain in his gold, and you would prefer not to meet him again, I see. And you shall not. You are enemies? Yes. And Bagdad is a bad place for enemies, for might makes right in these ugly and unartistic streets. You might kill Sir Edgar if you were to meet him, and then who would have his gold? Surely not I for my pictures. No. I had better assist you to avoid him. He has very sharp eyes. He goes about Bagdad as though he saw everything. He has been here but two weeks, but I verily believe he knows more about Bagdad than does Ardavan. My servants will tell him that you have been here. These terrible servants tell everything to any one who will talk with them, and this nobleman is a great traveller and a great talker. He was born in Bombay, and talks with my servants in their own South Persian dialect, while they have to talk with me in mine of North Persia. He gives

them gold. They worship him. Half the time I only guess what he is saying. He is a great scamp ; there is no doubt about it. But his money, that is pure gold ! No, no ! you must not kill him till I have sold him my pictures. But what am I thinking about ? Were you going through Bagdad on your way westward ? Are you in haste ? Of course you are ! I shall be helping you, saving Sir Edgar's life, and serving myself, to assist you on your way. You will not think rudely of me and of Oriental hospitality, because you know the cause ; and, if ever you come this way again, why, come and stop with Ardavan. Stay as long as you will. You will always be welcome, and are welcome to stay now, if you will promise me not to kill Sir Edgar Stanley till after he has paid me for my pictures. You would rather go ? Yes. Then you shall. By very good chance I came from Damascus only a few days ago, and my little caravan is not yet dismissed. You shall take it, and be on your way at once. You shall go with it as far as you please. Take it with you to Europe, if you like. It has already been there once with me ; and, when you have done with it, just turn it about as you would your dog, and say, 'Go home !' The leader is a very trusty servant of mine. He would come back to me from the North Pole, though he were frozen to a block of ice there."

"But my sister?" gasped Dr. Carleton, grasping Ardavan by the arm in a desperate endeavor to stop the eternal chatter of that Oriental tongue.

"Ah, yes !" said Ardavan with an indifferent sigh.

"So you have a sister? I had almost forgotten it. I have a sister, too, but never in this world am I able to forget that for a moment. Verily, I sometimes think her almost a nuisance. She is in Europe now studying, I suppose, though what I cannot imagine, for she knows more now than the sages. She knows everything but how to keep men from falling in love with her; and I have had to make a journey all the way to Europe to rid her of some pestilential monster, who thought he had discovered what it was to love, and was determined to force her to let him try the experiment at her expense, and see how long he could endure it. She has a beautiful face, and money enough to buy the whole of Bagdad with her income. She laughs at me because I keep on painting in this dull town, and will not stay in Europe and help her spend her gold. But she is a true woman! She is pure as the angels before the good God in heaven."

For a moment the clear and passionless voice of Ardavan trembled. Taking advantage of the silence that could last but an instant, Osgood repeated, —

"But, sir, I should rather die in Bagdad than leave it without my sister. I will pay you ten times what all your pictures cost, if I kill Sir Edgar; but I prefer to stay."

Ardavan smiled. His proudly curving lips were even prouder when he smiled.

"I do not sell my pictures for more than they are worth," said he. "If I did, Zobeide would buy them all, and keep me in Europe." Then he added, more

sternly than he had spoken before : " I have told the American doctor once that his safety and mine depended on his silence upon a subject about which he seems determined to talk. Take the caravan I offer. While we have been talking they have been making it ready, and I hear it now in the court below. It has just entered. Instantly be on your way to Damascus, if you are wise. The leader is already instructed, and will guide you well. You may trust him with your dearest treasure. Only remember and let the sand lie loose beneath your feet. Just beyond the city gate you will meet two men, upon the left-hand side. Say to them, ' Welcome,' and if one reply ' Welcome to you,' take him with you to Damascus. If not, then come back to the house of Ardavan. Fly, fly ! Answer me nothing. Forget that you have met me. A word from you may cost you everything."

The gentle and graceful Ardavan seemed suddenly to have become an inexplicable fury. Osgood Carleton trembled before him. He raised his hand in a desperate gesture to implore attention while he uttered words that must be spoken in spite of all danger. But the dark-skinned artist smiled again, as though he had only been running into some odd ecstasy over one of his horrible idols. He pointed toward the door a slender finger, upon which a diamond flashed. He said, in a voice that was almost as soft as a woman's : " In the hall the servant is waiting who led you from the street. Follow her to the court. And now, farewell forever ! unless by chance

we meet again somewhere in this trackless desert that men call the world."

Like one waking from a dream, Dr. Carleton found himself alone. How, where, and when Ardavan had vanished, he could not tell. He was almost tempted to think it all a myth. Yet he certainly stood in the same wonderful studio.

He stopped for a moment to wonder if Ardavan had really been there at all, and if he were not still waiting for him under some hallucination of the poison of Zobeide's tomb, or the incense from the bronze gold censer. He opened the door. The hag stood there with the flickering lamp. He wondered if she had left the door since he had entered. He followed her to the court. Three horses and two laden mules were there. One horse was mounted by the leader. Another waited for him. The third was saddled, but held by the leader. He looked at it in astonishment. He mounted, wondering still what was coming, and what he was doing, and rode away, followed by the two mules guided by servants.

Just beyond the gate, upon the left hand, there were two Turks, like beggars by the wayside. Leaning from his horse, Dr. Carleton, in a low tone, gave to the two the watchword Ardavan had given him. "Welcome to you," replied one of the two. Dr. Carleton leaped from his horse, and scarce repressed a cry of mad delight as he lifted Maime into the vacant saddle. The other turned back, and they rode away.

CHAPTER XXV.

ALL night the brother and sister, with the guide, followed well the instructions of Ardavan, and the sand lay loose beneath their horses' feet. The guide rode silently and swiftly before them. Their horses followed the leader without urging. The moon crept higher and higher, and its white light silvered the sand, then it sank slowly, lower and lower, and the shadows crept toward the eastern horizon, growing longer and longer till they disappeared; and the stars in the peerless blue-black sky shone without tremor or twinkle through the clear, dry air. They had passed beyond the range of the ruins, and more than once rode through rude little villages, new when compared with the ruins, though old when the Italian explorer, in his Spanish ships, sighted the first clusters of the Caribbees. They were beyond the barrenness about Bagdad, too; and hills and groves, not over many or over large, broke the monotony of the way, and sometimes startled the riders, who could not easily forget their experience of the morning previous.

"I was right," said Maime, "and before we reached Bagdad we were met by Sir Edgar."

"Before!" exclaimed her brother; "you do not mean —"

"Yes, indeed, I do mean," she interrupted. "I mean that the band of robbers that stopped us was hired and headed by my husband."

She spoke the words with a low, fierce eagerness, as though the torture and humiliation were a penance she was almost proudly paying.

"I begin to understand it now," said Osgood Carleton. "He intended that I should die in that horrible tomb." He ground his teeth.

"He thought you were already dead," said Maime; "for it was when he said that to some one with him that I first heard and recognized his voice. I only saw his face for an instant, and it bore that same fearful smile. I do not believe he knew that I saw him, or heard his voice; for he did not speak to me, and in a moment more he went away. I have not seen him since."

"But how did you come in the house of the artist Ardavan?" asked her brother, struggling to throw more light upon the mysterious events of the four-and-twenty hours; that had been but four-and-twenty, after all, in spite of the ages that seemed to have elapsed.

"I am as ignorant as you can be," said Maime. "I was simply taken there with my maid, as carefully as though I had been made of wax. We were placed in a little room opening out of the one where you met me. Very soon that lovely man came in to see me. I was crying and distracted, thinking of you. He sat down and talked with me. O Osgood! a man so gentle and so strong, and such a man as he, I

never thought to find among the best of Christians. Just think of it, in such a fearful country ! While he talked he made me forget to cry. He made me even forget about you, Osgood, — he did indeed, — and yet I remembered you all the time. I told him that I was ready to give myself up to my husband again if he would set you free. He said that if you were dead it would be useless to make such an offer ; and that if you were living, as he hoped you were, he would surely bring you to me, and set us free together if he could. I trusted him from the very first moment, for something in him told me that he could do it. In the joy of the moment I turned to tell Bertha, the maid. To my astonishment she was sitting just where she had placed herself as we entered, and sound asleep. I started to wake her, but he laid his hand upon my arm and said, ‘ No. Let her sleep. The wine I gave her has made her heavy. People do no mischief while they sleep.’ I was almost angry with him, but of course I dared not show it then ; and before he left he called two servants to take her into another room, and lay her on a divan. Even then she only waked enough to walk. And poor girl ! The only horrible thing about the man is that he made me leave her there when I came away. She was still asleep, and he would not let me wake her, or tell me in which room she was sleeping. I almost refused to go without her, but he said that Sir Edgar would provide for her, and that if she did not wish his provision he would surely send her safely after us.”

As the day dawned, the travellers drew rein at a caravansary; and glad enough they were to rest and refresh themselves! The accommodations were so slight as to render the comforts bound upon the backs of the mules indispensable. Impatiently they awaited their arrival. They came at last, and with them came Bertha, the maid. She fell into her mistress' arms, and bitterly reproached her for having deserted her. She said that she awoke and discovered herself alone; that she found her way to the court just as the mules were passing out; that she saw her mistress' travelling-bag upon the back of one of them, and, knowing that they must lead her to her, she followed them all night long. Maime had gathered indefinite doubts about the maid, under the united influence of her brother and Ardavan; but such an act as this was not calculated to encourage them, and even Dr. Carleton admitted the necessity of protecting her, now that she had thrown herself into their hands again.

Rapidly they moved along their journey, and in due time were approaching Damascus. In the exuberance of those fertile valleys they shunned the crowded caravansaries, and tented by themselves.

One night, in the silent, spirits' hour, — one would have known that it was midnight without consulting either moon or watch, — Maime and the maid lay sleeping in the tent, pitched upon a low hillside, just off the trail. The animals were tethered beyond, the servants were sleeping on the ground beside them. Dr. Carleton sat alone by the dying fire. It was not

such a fire as he had known in army life, yet it recalled those hours to him. It was almost dead. He had dreamed the last dream that the embers would inspire, and was growing drowsy. He would wait but a moment more, while the fire lasted in the nargileh which he was smoking. But at last the twisting stem lay idly in his fingers. The fire was out, but he was rapt in the wondrous fascination of the scene that floated before him.

The trail led through a gorge between two hills. The cloudless sky above was studded brilliantly with stars, the black walls of the ravine were glossed with gathered dew, the silence was softened by the sighing of the breeze among the rattling olive leaves. The loneliness was broken, now and then, by the faint shadow of an Arab band; trailing trains of camels in the endless caravans that carry the commodities of life and the conveniences of death to and from Damascus, — shimmering shadows in that strange land of silhouettes!

Then all was still. The breeze died away. There was not a sign of life, till, in the distance, a shadow larger than anything he had seen before attracted Dr. Carleton's closer attention. His eye followed it as it swung along the trail with that inevitable and gracefully ungainly motion of the ship of the great sand-sea. It was a huge and solitary camel. When half-way through the gorge, it turned suddenly to the left, and approached the smouldering fire. It loomed up out of the darkness, and saluted with an agonized gurgle, coming mournfully through that long, writh-

ing neck. As Dr. Carleton rose doubtfully to his feet, the camel sank upon his knees in response to the silent command of his rider,—a slender figure clad in the richest habiliments of the East. The moonlight and the fire-light disclosed no more; but the diamonds flashed upon the hand that waved the Oriental salaam, and the low voice and the faultless English betrayed the presence of the Persian, Ardavan.

Dr. Carleton would have greeted him with an exclamation of delight; but the jewelled hand remained raised, and became a command to silence which he could not misunderstand.

"There has been a murder," said Ardavan, "committed by a band of robbers, ten miles back upon the trail. They will pass here in an hour. If your camp remain where it is, they will sight it, and the worst will be your own." Then leaning upon his camel's neck, he added, in a still lower tone: "There is a scorpion in yonder tent; guard your tongue! I am unknown to you."

He gouged the haunches of the camel with the long iron-tipped rod, and with a fearful wail the huge animal plunged again into the solitude of the night, and was lost beyond the ravine with his mysterious master.

Dr. Carleton hurriedly aroused the sleepers, moved the tent over the hill, extinguished the fire, and, when all was again at rest, he placed a servant upon guard, and went back to watch for the robber band. He secreted himself in the low branches of an olive-tree.

A small caravan went by on its way to Damascus. It carried no burdens of merchandise. It was, doubtless, the retinue of Ardavan. Another crossed its track, bound for Bagdad. Then four horsemen rode at a slow canter from depth to depth through the dark ravine. They passed beneath the olive-tree. There were three Arabs and one European. The face of the latter was ghastly white in the moonlight. The hands that held the reins were slender and delicate for a robber. The figure sat gracefully upon the horse, and the dark eyes scanned searchingly every shadow of the ravine.

Dr. Carleton shuddered. Involuntarily his hand rested upon the pistol in his belt. Justifiable murder? What was there to justify it? With his hand still resting on the metal but, he watched the riders as their forms grew fainter and fainter till the dim shadows disappeared. Then he went back to the tent and reported that the robber band had passed, and that they were safe for the night.

CHAPTER XXVI.

O DAMASCUS, opal of the Orient ! Priceless pearl in thine emerald enfoldings ! By mid-day and midnight, at sunrise and sunset, when the God of Fire hangs above the blue or the Goddess of the Night sails her ceaseless circuit, when all the heavens are bright and blue, or the stars alone flash in the black firmament, ever and always, matchless Queen among the cities of the East ! Damascus !

For six days Osgood Carleton and his sister had rested in this paradise. Why ? They did not know. A message had warned them to stay. In the early mornings they had walked together through the gorgeous groves that girdle the city, listlessly listening to the incomparable melody of the numberless fountains. Through the day they remained in a quiet and secluded resort beyond the city, after the fashion of many travellers ; and by slow degrees they ventured at night into the streets of superb cafés, where nature and art blend in the one ambition to make the most luxurious and attractive haunt of earth. Dr. Carleton dared not leave his sister alone for an hour ; but together they sipped the delicious black coffee and breathed the fragrant air that bore the incense of the thousand flowering shrubs, and listened to the pas-

sionate music that is the pride and pleasure of the princes of Damascus.

As the time wore on, Osgood Carleton began to hope that his enemy might have gone farther than Damascus, or possibly have given up the search. He did not know Sir Edgar so well as he thought. He had changed materially himself, and even fancied that the disguise might be enough to cover him if they met by chance on the street at night. Hope is a very ready and worthy friend when a little distance veils the danger. But as earnestly as he hoped that they might not again meet Sir Edgar, he was equally eager in the desire to find, somewhere in the world, the inexplicable Ardavan.

On the sixth evening of their sojourn in Damascus he met him face to face. There was only a half-dozen of the revellers in the Royal Café between them. Ardavan, gracefully and gorgeously dressed, with his dark fez and black hair and olive-brown skin and flashing black eyes ! Just as he would have pictured him ; just as he would have dreamed of him ; careless and free ; unmindful of anything and everything, yet at the same instant seeming to comprehend all that was passing, not only in public, but even in the hearts of those about him ; scorning the world, because he knew it too well ; shunning it, because it bored him ; dallying with it, poised upon the tip of his finger, because he found in the act of seeing into all its secrets a momentary pleasure when others failed ! Ardavan, as fascinating as he was incomprehensible, was listlessly strolling past the pleasure-seekers of the café,

intuitively repelled from joining them by the thought that they and their pleasure were beneath him, and that in their society there was nothing new, nothing attractive for him to unravel and illuminate. And yet, most incomprehensible of all the mysteries, he was leaning with an almost gracious air upon the arm of the English nobleman.

Dr. Carleton had started to his feet to accost him when he noticed Sir Edgar, and sank back again into the shaded corner they had purposely selected to avoid attention. But Ardavan's eyes searched every shadow. The fact that here was something hidden seemed reason enough to bid him investigate. The diamonds flashed upon the hand that waved the salaam, and the dark face nodded and the white teeth shone like pearls in the brilliant light as he smiled for the flash of an eye; and then the head turned, and he was again addressing Sir Edgar, calling his attention to something across the street.

So soon as they dared, the brother and sister left the royal restaurant, and made their way toward the incomparable garden where they had pitched the tents that formed their home. They had not gone far when they were overtaken by one of the Arab waiters of the café, who silently handed Dr. Carleton a card, held out his hand for the inevitable backsheesh, and having received it as silently retired. The Arab servant rarely speaks, unless that flood of backsheesh flows too slowly from his master's purse.

The writing was faint upon the card; but, stopping beneath one of the great swinging lamps that

make Damascus so weirdly beautiful at night, they read a hastily written line:—

“You are dangerously bold. Your camp is picturesque and an object of interest. The road to Jerusalem is open.”

There was no signature and no address. But every little letter on the card was a miniature image of Ardavan.

When the next morning broke, it found the Americans well upon their way to the Holy City, in spite of a sudden illness which attacked Bertha, the maid, so soon as she heard that they were about to move.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE Jordan ford they crossed at the point where once the Prophet and High Priest of Israel went down to be baptized of John, and the muddy river rushed on to the Dead Sea down below, with a strength and velocity that seemed capable of filling that low basin, till its waters should not only reach the level of the great oceans of the wide world, but even have a surplus flood to pour into them. But in thousands of years of rushing the river has not yet half filled the sea. The forest of weeping greenery was behind them.

The winding way through the sand and the low sage grasses brought them to Jericho, — not the old Jericho, down by the spring, just at the foot of the rocky hills that four thousand years ago were so green and fair to see, but a little nearer the desert and the sea, on the road to the Jordan; New Jericho; crumbling and old as the ruins by the spring.

It was night when they reached New Jericho; and, though Jerusalem was but a few miles away, they were obliged to wait there till morning in order to pass by daylight the "Good Samaritan's Inn," among the hills; in which rocky region to-day, as well as eighteen hundred years ago, many a man falls among thieves on his way from Jericho to Jerusalem.

It was a weird, wild valley about the old city ; and as the little caravan moved noiselessly toward the dilapidated hedge-walls, the riders caught glimpses of many a low camp-fire, the sharp outlines of crouching Arabs in the smoky light, and moving shadows of camel trains trailing away to the west and south.

Morning again sent them on their way, and they passed the ragged rocks in safety ; passed the little town of Bethlehem, with its low, white walls and its square, flat roofs, and its narrow streets and dirty children, holding up pitifully lean and little hands, and thin, forlorn faces, with languid, listless eyes to beg for backsheesh.

Over the last hill the horses cantered as though they appreciated the nearness of rest, and through the Gate of Jerusalem, which stood open wide, they entered and found themselves at last upon the sacred soil of the Holy City of Christendom. But what had been gained by it ? That the future must determine. For the present they most needed rest.

"We will not stay long in Jerusalem," said Osgood Carleton to his sister. "We will not wait for that man to find us out again and drive us on. This running like thieves before an officer is absolutely unbearable. We will place ourselves out of this God-forsaken land, where he evidently has much the best of us, as quickly as possible. We will find some civilization before long ; and there we will make a stand and meet him face to face, if he dare present himself."

"You may well feel so, Osgood," said Maime,

earnestly, "and I feel it for you. I too am very weary of all to do with this cowardly wandering, except that it has given me the joy of your company. It has been a choice for me between you two, and in my selfishness I have thought only of myself. But you are right, Osgood. Whether it be duty or not toward him, it is my duty to you; and so soon as we are out of this lawless land, anywhere where there is little humanity for appearance' sake, I have determined to yield the day. He has worked hard for me, and possibly he will prize me more than he did before."

"Never, Maime!" said Osgood, sternly. "If it were to give you up to him, sooner I'd walk with Cartaphilus, the cursed cobbler, from world's end to world's end, and on through all eternity. But we will find some way to resist and overcome that man. He has not been guilty of so much villany and left no trace behind."

Maime only smiled. It was useless to argue, yet in that smile her brother saw and trembled at the sight, that she was determined beyond controversion to carry out her will.

As day after day passed, though the subject was strictly avoided by both, Dr. Carleton discovered that the resolution was already bitterly at work. It was like that last straw which could break a camel's back; and Maime was yielding slowly but surely to that disease which no medicine can touch. The courage and will that had supported her through so much had left her hopeless in the hands of Fate,

and, without so much as waiting to see what the result might be, she was unwittingly sinking under the weight before it fell. The doctor's utmost energy and skill, urged by every demand of a brother's love, failed to stay the stern hand that held their destinies.

The great Easter festival was at hand, — the greatest celebration held in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre; a season when pilgrims swarm the Holy City and wedge their way to the Sacred Tomb upon pavements of flesh and blood. It is the time of the greatest excitement of the year; and the different creeds that worship in the church, represented by thousands of their followers, hold, not a high carnival only, but high riot often, about the tomb of the only begotten Son of Love.

Such a scene, shocking and sacrilegious though it be, would surely serve to awaken sentiments of some sort in the breast of any rational observer; and, in the hope that it might turn the melancholy that had taken possession of his sister, Osgood Carleton said, "We will stay here, if you like, Maime, till after Easter day. Then we will see Europe and America once more."

She offered no comment. It mattered very little where the time was passed until the trial came, and thus they waited to witness the horrible human passions of the holy Passion Week. But the week went by, and Osgood Carleton failed as utterly as before to find a sentiment either of interest or disgust. Upon the last great day they were seated in the

balcony overlooking the surging mob. Even the iron railing about the stone of unction was torn down by the rioters, and the sacred slab was desecrated by vile, sin-shodden souls. The low stone sepulchre was besieged by the hooting crowd, and more than one found a shorter way to the hereafter than on through the life he had been living, before that terrible day was done.

The gallery alone was comparatively clear. Only those who had gained permission from the Mohammedan authorities owning the Church of the Holy Sepulchre were admitted there. Beside the spectators there was a guard of Mohammedan soldiers in the gallery, — an absolute necessity in the church, through Passion Week, — to keep the Christians from open and bloody rebellion among themselves.

As Dr. Carleton watched the furious throng about the sepulchre, his eyes involuntarily turned from the exciting picture, and, as if drawn by some unseen force, they followed the line of the gallery and instinctively rested upon the figure of Ardavan, leaning gracefully over the rail, smoking the inevitable cigarette, watching the little wreaths as they wandered over the tumultuous pilgrims, laughing as the ashes fell among the wranglers; the reckless Ardavan of Damascus, the mysterious Ardavan of the desert, the incomprehensible and talented Ardavan of Bagdad, the philosophical and generous Ardavan of the ancient burying-ground, and now the passionless scoffer Ardavan, as he sat in the subdued light of the low window, where the gallery turns and dis-

appears, at the chapel by the entrance to the Latin Convent.

Dr. Carleton's eyes had been riveted upon him but a moment when he turned his head, and looked directly in his face ; but this time, without a smile of recognition, though he evidently knew him, and without a motion among the diamonds that sparkled upon the slender hand. Slowly, very slowly, Ardavan turned his head still farther, and looked steadily before him. Instinctively Osgood Carleton followed the direction, even as though Ardavan had spoken. He started in terror as his gaze rested upon the motionless form of Sir Edgar Stanley, midway between himself and Ardavan, with his eyes fixed upon his sister.

Grasping Maime's hand, he whispered nervously, "Come, we must go from here."

"He is here," said Maime, with a shudder. "I feel his eyes upon me. Where is he?"

"Just behind you," replied her brother. "Do not look that way. Come, we must go, and go quickly, before he can overtake us."

"I prefer to go alone?" said Maime, rising. She turned directly toward Sir Edgar. Her brother sprang forward to detain her ; but she was already out of reach, wending her way through the crowd, whose attention was entirely taken up with the scene below, and steadily approaching her husband.

As he rose to follow her, Dr. Carleton cast one imploring glance toward Ardavan, as though he could aid him if he would. But the artist's eyes were fixed upon Sir Edgar ; and, suddenly, just before his

wife reached him, the English nobleman tottered, staggered, and almost fell to the floor. His eyelids drooped drowsily. There was no possible sign of excitement; but turning slowly, and as though moving in his sleep, with his eyes apparently closed, Sir Edgar walked toward Ardavan.

Maime paused irresolutely, and her brother overtook her. As he did so he looked his thanks to Ardavan, feeling sure that in some way he must have done it; but the artist's eyes were still fixed in a fierce, mesmeric glare upon the approaching Englishman. He rose, walked slowly backward, till he stood in the door of the Latin Convent. There he waited till Sir Edgar had reached him, and they disappeared together, followed closely by Maime and her brother.

In the court beyond the outer door they found Ardavan alone, carelessly smoking a cigarette. He smiled, bowed, and gently touched the hands they offered him, as though it were the first time he had recognized them. "A strange performance, inside," said he; "yet I suppose that you Christians are rather pleased, and would almost join it." He laughed and offered Dr. Carleton a cigarette.

"I am much more eager to meet Sir Edgar Stanley," Maime said, abruptly.

"Possible?" The artist smiled. "He did not seem so very anxious to gratify that desire, I thought, there in the church."

"He is my husband," said Maime. "It is my duty."

"She must not meet him!" exclaimed the brother.

"Why not?" asked Ardavan, carelessly.

"It is a long story," replied the doctor; "but believe me, all the wonderful favors you have done for us in the past will be nothing to persuading my sister to abandon this meeting."

"My brother is generous," said Maime, with a shrug of the shoulders, such as in the old days said so plainly, "but I have a will of my own," and added calmly, "I must and I will see him."

"If he is really your husband, there can be little danger; for you are both Christians," said Ardavan, with a tinge of scorn.

"It must not be! It shall not be!" exclaimed Dr. Carleton, looking almost fiercely at Ardavan.

Ardavan smiled, blew a perfect little wreath of smoke into the air, and, as if trying to send his words through the wreath, replied, "From the little that I know about women, I think the American doctor is wrong, and that his sister will see this man in spite of us. I should advise him to yield gracefully, and come with his sister to my rooms, just across the square. Come in an hour. He will be there, and ready to receive you."

"I will come," said Maime.

"Impossible!" groaned Dr. Carleton. "Ardavan! Don't desert us now that we have most need of you."

"Desert you!" repeated Ardavan, with a little laugh. "If I have yet deceived you with bad advice, count this with it and go your way; if you have done well to follow me in the past, you will

do better now. In just one hour that brown door with the iron bars across it will open to you, if you wish it. If not, then this must be my farewell ; for I go to Damascus to-morrow and on to Bagdad. What a beautiful sky hangs over this horrible festival ! ”

Apparently Ardavan had suddenly entered the church again, yet they were not at all sure that he had not disappeared in the opposite direction, or indeed simply vanished where he stood. They had only followed the direction of the jewelled finger as it pointed toward the sky, glanced for an instant, looked back, and Ardavan was gone, leaving no trace behind but a little white wreath of smoke curling in and out and all about upon itself.

When the shock subsided, Dr. Carleton looked at his watch. “It is just three. At four we must be there, if you insist ; but, if you follow my advice, you will be upon your way to Jaffa then.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE hour was not a long one. Osgood Carleton knew better than to argue the question with his sister. He presented the case as they walked together down the Via Dolorosa, with its high walls on either side and its blank and bare blotch, where the Ecce Homo staircase stood, and its judgment hall with the hideous image of Christ in Agony standing almost in the doorway.

As Dr. Carleton beheld it looking down at him, his thoughts involuntarily reverted to Ardavan's collection of horrible deities; and he wondered if that strange man, who did not shudder before those representations, would also be able to derive a benefit from any thought which this crucifix, in its colossal and ghastly dimensions, could possibly inspire.

Then he went on with the story he was telling Maime, of the joys and comforts she might yet appreciate and confer if once more they went on together and made America their first stopping-place; of the fortune that waited for her to appear and claim, and of the good she might do with it, as well as of the terrible burial she was preparing for herself in the other alternative.

She admitted his words without a murmur or a contradiction; but when the bell in the low hospice

tolled four, with her brother reluctantly following, she entered the low, brown doorway with the iron bars, and was ushered into a chamber above that might have been created expressly for Ardavan.

They had to wait some time for the dark-faced artist. It seemed one of his own peculiarities to be always indifferently behindhand when there was nothing to be gained by haste, and always beforehand when there was anything to be thwarted by appearing unexpectedly. But he came at last, as graceful and as gorgeously Oriental as ever, smoking the fragrant Persian cigarette, and seeming to have utterly forgotten that there was anything of importance to be attended to.

"I have come," said Maime, advancing and extending her hand, which he held in both of his till she had finished speaking. "And though you have been very kind before, I thank you more for this than for anything else that you have done for me."

Dr. Carleton noticed that Ardavan hardly smiled as he replied, "We can tell better how much the thanks may mean after the day is done. So you have come to see Sir Edgar Stanley. I told him you were coming, and he is eager to meet you, after all. He assures me he has something of importance to say to you. Sir Edgar is more an American than an Englishman, he tells me; and, thinking to please him, I had already invited the American consul to dine with us. You too will be glad to meet him by and by. Just now my fancy tells me that you would prefer to be alone. If the American doctor will allow

me," he said, resting a delicate hand upon his arm, "we will leave you for the present. Sir Edgar will be here soon."

Osgood Carleton drew back indignantly. This cool impertinence was too much; for he was thoroughly averse to leaving his sister to the fury of the man he had such good cause to distrust.

"You cannot mean —" he exclaimed.

But Ardavan bowed and smiled and repeated, "If the American doctor will allow me. At present this is my home. Does he suppose a woman could receive an insult under the roof of Ardavan?"

Dr. Carleton looked in despair at his sister. She extended her hand, and clasping his, said, "Go, Osgood, go! It is much better so."

And though he still rebelled, Dr. Carleton found himself led as politely and indifferently into another apartment as though it were but a friendly fancy to show him something new. But now at last even the tongue of Ardavan failed to turn his thoughts entirely.

He moved nervously in his chair. He paced the room. He listened anxiously for a cry for help. He heard, almost indignantly, the words which the artist was speaking. He started as the door opened. But it was a stranger, and he turned away in disgust. Ardavan, however, sprang forward with unaccountable eagerness and grasped his hand.

"Is there any slip?" he asked.

"I believe not," replied the stranger; "but we must have two witnesses at least to this proceeding. Is the lady's relative here?"

For once Ardavan's voice was less firm and musical, and, almost as though embarrassed for the moment, he turned to Dr. Carleton.

"I beg a thousand pardons," he murmured. "This is the American consul, Dr. Carleton, and this is the brother of the lady."

The consul took his hand, and was about to speak, when Ardavan interrupted him.

"The American consul has seen your sister, and wishes us to be legal witnesses, I suppose, to some transaction she has made with Sir Edgar Stanley. Of course we are ready to do as she may wish." And, with a mute assent from the mystified brother, the three entered the room they had lately left.

Maime stood with her back toward them, looking out of the window. Sir Edgar was leaning upon a chair, and smiling defiantly. But he was far from the same man whom Osgood Carleton remembered. The dress was less scrupulous, the hand was less firm, the face was less delicate, the eye was less steady, and the smile less deliberately calm. Wine and debauchery had begun to tell their fearful tale, and the proud and wicked nobleman was paying the fine to the devil for the help he had received from him.

"There are these papers to be signed in your presence and by you," said the consul, speaking very low, "and then the work is finished, so far as I can do it. It will only require ratification by legal authority in America to be valid forever. The force begins with the moment of signature. Your name should come first," he added, bowing to Sir Edgar.

Maime only turned her head to see if she were addressed, but as the Englishman stepped forward she assumed her old position again.

Sir Edgar signed the paper, with an unsteady hand ; and Maime, responding a moment later, wrote her name beneath it.

"May I read the paper before I witness the signature?" asked Dr. Carleton.

"It cannot be necessary," said Ardavan, but as the consul bowed assent the doctor sat by the table, and, with his head supported on his hand, he read the irregular lines which had evidently been written by Sir Edgar himself ; and from the already darkened ink it was equally evident that he had written them before the appearance of his wife upon the scene.

It said : "I, Edgar Stanley, born in Bombay, India, make this confession of my own free will, and in justice to a woman whom I have deeply wronged. My marriage with Mary Carleton, of ———, U. S. A., was absolutely and entirely illegal, for causes which I admit with this confession. Nor since that fifteenth day of July, 1863, has there been a time when it could have been legal, nor has the lady named, by any act or deed, become my wife except in name. She came to me under false pressure, innocently. I have no claim whatever of any nature against her, and simply ask for mercy." In a sealed envelope was the statement referred to. Then followed the legal form of agreement, to accept the terms, the two signatures, and soon Dr. Carleton's name, and that of an American gentleman summoned

from a neighboring hotel, on account of Persian superstitions, which prevented Ardavan from witnessing the document.

The papers, duly sealed, were delivered to Maime, who, through it all, had not turned from the window. The American consul pulled his hat down over his eyes in the characteristic mode of his countrymen, and, with a grim and would-be-professional smile, said farewell. Dr. Carleton and his sister followed, each giving a warm pressure of the hand to Ardavan, and left, probably forever, Jerusalem, Damascus, Bagdad, Bushire, Aden, and Egypt.

The two men were left face to face alone together. The fiendish smile only deepened on the lips of the English nobleman, but the reckless, careless expression faded from the face of Ardavan, and for a moment one might almost have heard a fly treading upon the window-pane. Then, glaring fiercely upon the young artist, every fibre of his frame trembling with an emotion that in his better days he would have hidden from the eyes of an enemy, the Englishman hissed : " Now, damn you, I will collect the debt of you with compound interest ! "

Ardavan folded his arms across a breast that in its deep heavings alone betrayed him. His dark eyes, unflinching, were fixed upon the wreck of the English nobleman. His thin lips curved in scorn, but there was no tremor ; his voice was clear, almost piercing in its ring, as he replied, " Edgar Stanley, I am your debtor. Collect of me ! I am ready to meet your demands. I swear, by God above, that it will be impossible for you to ask too much ! "

Sir Edgar stared vacantly at Ardavan for a moment, leaned heavily upon the chair, and, with one hand pressed upon his forehead said in a husky, broken voice, "I will make the terms to-morrow. For to-night I shall be better if left alone."

Turning slowly, the artist left the room; but the fiendish smile did not return to the lips of Sir Edgar, nor did the reckless laugh come back to the face of Ardavan.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FOR a moment Sir Edgar stood watching the door, which had closed behind Ardavan. He trembled as though he were afraid of it. Then he slowly approached, and turned the key. The other doors he bolted, and threw himself upon a low divan. It was fast becoming dark. Shivering, he lit the swinging lamp. The moving shadows, as it flickered and swayed from side to side, made him shudder. He covered his eyes with his hands. The figures on the Turkish rug came squirming and writhing up to him. He drew his feet on to the divan, and hid his face in the pillow; but imagination was worse than the reality, and with a shudder he turned over again.

The heavy curtains, in the uneven glare of the lamplight, gathered themselves up into ghostly shapes, and great, gaunt hands extended from them, with wriggling fingers, clutching for his throat. He sprang to his feet, hurled the divan pillow at the phantoms, and fled to the opposite side of the room. There, upon an Eastern pedestal, stood an antique hourglass. Staggering and cringing, he examined it for a moment. It indicated seven o'clock. "You lie!" he gasped, and dashing it upon the floor crushed it to atoms. Then he turned again to the divan, his heart throbbing as though his body were not large enough to give it space, and it would burst

its confines ; but the bamboo cushions melted away before his eyes, and slimy, scaly monsters took their place. The divan, too, was slowly swinging and swaying to and fro, and creeping toward him. The shadow which he cast upon the floor sprang up in hideous form before him. He leaped behind the table. The glass of the broken sand-clock crackled beneath his feet, and sounded like the hiss of demons coming through the floor. Then the room was filled with a ghastly company of moving corpses, the grave-dust clinging to their draggling shrouds, and dropping from their discolored faces, and each one hissed and grinned and laughed at him ; and, round and round the room as he might go, he found the circle still complete. The very air began to smoke and wriggle with the horrible creations of his wine-stained brain. With both hands clinched, he clutched his hair, and wrenched a matted tangle from his head. The agony was a joy and a relief. The tortuous and terrible fancies faded into the mists from which they had risen, and for a moment the lamp swung and the curtains hung, and the divan rested as before. Only the wreck of the hourglass lay upon the floor to tell of the terrors that for the moment had ceased their torments. Edgar Stanley, staggering across the room, grasped a decanter of wine which stood upon the table, and drained the last drop. By its fiery influence he was sobered, and, glaring in the face of the inevitable, he smiled. It was a ghastly facial contortion, and he groaned, " So you have come at last ! "

Up and down the room he paced in fearful excitement; then, stopping suddenly before a mirror, he folded his arms, and calmly scrutinized himself.

"Edgar Stanley," he said solemnly, "your day is done. Your life and your body are ruined, and your soul is lost! Defied by a woman! You are crippled, and you cannot move."

He held out his hand, and watched it tremble as though palsied. He bent forward, and looked deep into his own sunken and besotted eyes. "Powerless!" he groaned as he turned away. He took a small vial from his pocket, and looked at it.

"That was for Osgood Carleton," he said. Slowly he raised it to his lips, and dropped his head, that its contents might fall far down his throat. His teeth chattered violently. His hand shook till he almost dropped the vial.

"Ugh!" he groaned, and threw the contents on the floor. "I do not want to die. No, no! I cannot die!"

And, down in the shadows that floated round the room, glittering eyes glared at him, and the echoing of his chattering teeth filled the room with unearthly sounds.

Blindly he grouped for the decanter again, and, seizing it, threw it passionately to his lips; but only the gurgle of his own breathing resounded through the empty globe. He hurled it from him, and it lay shattered on the floor; but, like the phoenix, it slowly rose again as a great, grim coffin, open at the lid, empty and waiting for an occupant; and, while he

shuddered before it, it assumed vitality, and, slowly tipping from side to side, came down the room.

"A living grave!" he gasped. "The poison! where is it?"

Scattered on the floor. And his hands, twisted in terrible contortions, were piteously extended, pleading to the velvet carpet to give him back his poison. But each tiny drop was a devil, damning him in merciless mockery.

Ardavan's girdle lay upon the table with the diamond-studded dagger in its rest. Sir Edgar dragged it from its sheath, and frantically plunged it toward himself. But his helpless arm missed even that short range. He made only a slight cut across the back of the other hand.

When he saw the blood trickling from the wound he dropped the dagger, and groaning piteously and trembling endeavored to stanch the blood.

"I didn't mean to," he cried. "I—I. No, no, no! I do not want to die. I cannot die!"

Great drops of perspiration, apparently icy cold, fell from his forehead. The coffin faded into the mists, and the mists sank into the curtains. The rug lay quietly upon the floor, and, with a deep groan, Sir Edgar fell heavily upon the divan. A moment later the perspiration ceased. Great knotted veins appeared, crossing his white temples, a lurid flame flashed before his eyes. His head was floating in a flood of fire.

One groan, one superhuman struggle shook his frame, and then every muscle and nerve relaxing, he

lay motionless upon the divan; a fragment of the cushion's lining, torn from its fastenings, mangled between his teeth. Thus, cold and dead, he lay before the eyes of Ardavan, in the morning.

It was very strange, that meeting, when one knew of the parting the night before. In the dark face and brilliant eyes there was no trace of all that icy mockery. The wondrous voice forgot its marvellous melody. Death came nearer to Ardavan than all his grim, bronze idols. He could scoff at emotion, but he too could find a heart.

He thought of Damascus, perhaps, perhaps of Bagdad, possibly of Jerusalem.

He thought of the living, at least; and, as he looked at the dead, his slender hands trembled till the diamonds flashed with an unwonted fire, and the delicate fingers folded themselves over the dead man's forehead, and pillowed the olive-brown cheek, and felt the fiery tears of Ardavan.

Thus the curtain fell, silently, upon the last scene of the drama. The forfeiture which the Englishman demanded in the morning was a burial at the hands of Ardavan, and was fully and freely paid. One mourner and one priest and four Persian servants formed the funeral cortege, as it wound slowly through the Gate of Jerusalem out into the low valley of Hinnom, and beyond it to the hill that faces the setting sun. And there, to-day, and doubtless for many years to come, may be seen the low marble slab, a square shaft, sunken almost to a level with the ground, because the story that it tells is of

importance to so few. But it testifies to any traveller who may stoop to read the inscription that beneath it is buried the body of Sir Edgar Stanley. It is sacred to no memory ; it signalizes not one good deed that could have been registered upon such a shrine. It tells the traveller the entirety of its tale when it asserts that Sir Edgar's body lies buried there. Even Ardavan dared not go further, and hope what the future of that soul might be. But, leaving the marble slab to mark the spot, that it might not be unwittingly disturbed by man, and with a sigh of deep, heart sympathy, he mounted the great white camel, and with his Oriental caravan sailed out once more upon that great white sea, lying between Jerusalem and Bagdad.

CHAPTER XXX.

AS Dr. Carleton had feared, they had scarcely reached Europe when the sudden reaction and freedom proved too much for his sister, and Maime suffered serious illness for several months. They heard of the death of Sir Edgar, through the American consul; and, as there was no longer cause for haste in returning to America, they spent nearly two years in wandering among the delights of the land which had offered only terrors when they had seen it before. The winter coming on again, found them turning once more toward Naples.

Naples! Of all the world! Lost from the Levant, but not from Oriental loveliness! Towers upon sunny hills! Terraces on the sunny sea! Palaces and villas, picturesque poverty, squalor, and matchless magnificence! No tongue can tell it all. And the eye! Ah! see Naples and die? No, no! See Naples and know, at last, the reality of life's long, endless holiday; where, from the prince to the pauper, from the aged matron, treading on the tomb that is brilliant with roses and hidden in the folds of beautiful rainbows, to the little belle who hardly knows why it is that she is loved and courted, life runs a royal race with romance, love, and happiness, and Time treads lightly as his cruel feet fall on flowers.

They sat in that passionately picturesque garden with the broad and beautiful Chiaja on one side, San Martino looking down from on the hill, and the fitful flashing of the far-famed Naples bay upon the other side, Capri in the distance, and to the left the smoking summit of the black murderer of Pompeii and Herculaneum.

They had each seen too much and too little of the romance of life to care to enter into its mysteries again, nevertheless they enjoyed seeing others enjoying it; and it was with sadness that they realized that life was real and life was earnest, and that there was more in it than whiling time away at Naples.

"We must go back to America," said Osgood.

"We will start to-morrow," Maime replied.

No wonder they sat later than usual in the garden that evening.

Capri had flashed like a diamond in the distance and disappeared. Vesuvius had wrapped his rugged lava ribs about with a rich Tyrian mantle. Deeper and deeper into the shadows of night he had shrunk away, till all that was left now was the black outline and the perpetual pillar of cloud. From the superb pavilion one of the finest of Italian orchestras was discoursing such passionate music as might almost have thrilled the frozen souls of the marble gods and goddesses. In and out among the maze of greenery, down the long garden, and where the lamps burned most brilliantly, mercenary mongers were dealing deliciously cool creams and fragrant ices. Here and there were sparkling wine and crystal, cream-crusts

coffee. Again the brother and sister lingered, lost with the rest, in the extravaganza of dreams and fairy-land.

Nothing could have been more natural than that these rambling thoughts of farewell should have carried Dr. Carleton still farther eastward, to that distant dwelling on the banks of the Tigris at Bagdad. He was going back to America, to enter at last upon the vigorous struggle for a name that should be more enduring than a banker's gold could purchase. In the long and tedious drudgery of his profession he felt sure that it would be years, at least, before he should again see the sunshine of Italy even, and sadly realized that doubtless he should never meet again that strangely fascinating, strangely genuine friend. He saw each form and feature outlined in the gracefully bending branches above their heads. He heard his voice in the sweetest strains of those wild Italian melodies. He saw his eyes flashing in the stars that pierced the leafy canopy. The dream made him restless. His cigar lost its fire. The cream no longer sparkled in foam upon his coffee. His ice was not even cool. He turned nervously in his chair. A strange feeling possessed him, as though some spirit, unseen, were standing by his side. Involuntarily he moved his head; his eyes wandered over that gay company, to the most distant corner of the brilliantly lighted pavilion, and, suddenly fixed in blank astonishment, they rested full upon the face of Ardavan. Black eyes as brilliant as the stars; smooth cheeks of olive brown; black hair, defying the Persian fez;

a perfect hand and flashing diamonds. Yes, that was Ardavan,—fearless, reckless Ardavan. He sat with his cheek supported in his palm, looking, apparently in utter unconsciousness, directly into the eyes of Dr. Carleton.

The music ceased. Dr. Carleton said to his sister, "I will be back in an instant," and hurried toward the Persian artist through that maze of tiny tables and laughing revellers. He wondered if it were possible that the artist had not recognized him. Surely he had given no sign. In less than two years, could he have forgotten all? He was not able to look far ahead again till he had very nearly reached the spot where Ardavan had been sitting. There he paused, and looked about him. Everything was apparently just as it had been, except before one table. There a waiter was removing an empty glass, and a European had already grasped a chair that must have been vacated but an instant before. But neither in the glare of the nearer lamps nor down the long avenues in any direction could he see an outline bearing the slightest resemblance to Ardavan. He returned, disappointed, to his sister; but they did not leave Naples in the morning.

A week went by. Then they saw again this mysterious, metaphysical brigand of Bagdad. He was riding in a royal coach, beside a princess of the blood. A conquest! People stared, and said aloud, "Is he son of the Pasha, that he makes a victory like this?" Had they known him better, they might have thought it only something more to laugh over when

he was again in his studio at Bagdad. And they might still have been mistaken. But there was nothing in the world that did not seem to yield to him. The princess smiled upon him, and seemed proud of the honor he bestowed.

He laughed as they dashed madly down the Chaija, and the diamonds on his fingers flashed in the Neapolitan sunlight as they had shone at Bagdad and Damascus; for in all the throng that crowded the Chaija he had recognized the Americans, and waved that same Oriental salaam, and he was gone.

Again they were watching the sun go down, this time from the abutment jutting out from the garden over the beautiful bay. It has been changed somewhat, but hardly improved, in the late enlargement of the garden. A yacht shot round the point where the fort projects, and almost within a stone's throw of the jutting abutment. She bore a merry party down the bay for an evening sail to Capri. At the helm sat the master of the yacht, the inevitable and graceful Ardavan, gathering curious combinations of color, perhaps to work into his clouds when he should reach his studio in Bagdad. This time the dark fez was lifted, in American fashion, and as ever the diamonds flashed, the white teeth shone. He turned the helm, and the yacht shot away over the bay into the crimson mists.

Two days again, and Dr. Carleton said to his sister, "This waiting is useless. We might as well be on our way."

Maime shrugged her shoulders, and replied, "I

am sorry not to see him, but surely he has had abundance of opportunity. If he wished he would have found us."

"To-morrow we will start," said her brother. "To-night let us see the play at San Carlo."

They were coming out of the theatre, — the greatest and grandest of its kind in all the world. None but travellers ever go with a distinctive idea of enjoying what is put upon the stage simply, and none but travellers are ever disappointed. A hand was laid on Dr. Carleton's shoulder, and, turning, he almost instinctively greeted Ardavan.

"You have been in Naples long?" he asked, in the old, indifferent way, and without waiting a reply. "I have fancied I might have seen you or some one like you once or twice upon the street, but never very near. There are so many people in these horrible great cities, and they crowd about one so mercilessly in this Western world and jostle so, that one always feels more like looking out for himself than looking out for friends."

They reached the outer door of the grand entrance, and the artist offered them seats in his carriage, — an elaborate display, with two Persian footmen. "I wish this were a drove of camels," he added, with a laugh. "Your elegant carriages make one feel like a helpless invalid."

The two had not far to go, and, in truth, with American dignity somewhat aroused by the peculiar mood of Ardavan, they declined the invitation, explaining that they proposed taking a farewell walk

through the garden, as they left the city in the morning.

Ardavan bowed and smiled, just as he had to the princess, just as he had to Sir Edgar, but to their surprise asked permission to accompany them.

"I think I told you that I had a sister in Europe," he said to Dr. Carleton, as they walked. "She pretends to be getting what your extravagant people call an education. How it will benefit her is more than I can see. Some day she will fall upon the altar which men who know nothing about it call 'love.' She will then become only the legal prisoner of a man." Ardavan snapped his delicate fingers in disgust. "But never mind. She has captured many accomplishments already, and I am urging her with all my power to return with me to our home in the East. Will she go? I am sure I do not know. She is here in Naples now, to see her host of worshippers make fools of themselves. And partly, perhaps, it may be that she came here to see me. But she has so many friends up among the lords of this paltry nobility that I hardly dare touch the tiny tips of her fingers. I know for a certainty, however, that she is a true, unsullied girl, with a heart that Heaven holds above suspicion. And the end of it all is this. I am going to dine with her to-morrow; and if you will do me a rare favor, that as an Oriental I cannot forget, you will accept my supplication and two brothers and two sisters, we will eat of the sacred salt at her table. Here is the address. Do me the honor to delay your departure for

a single day. Remember that my sister is sensible, and judges no one by the fitful falsity of an evening costume. You will receive the warmest welcome if you come in the dress you would have worn upon your way to Rome. And now farewell! God guard you till we meet again."

Ardavan was gone, as the phantom shadow of the shivering leaf that lay across the path floated away, leaving no trace behind.

"Shall we remain?" asked Osgood, doubtfully.

"It would surely be a rudeness to refuse," said Maime, looking up into her brother's eyes with a little laugh, as who should say, "What a fool I am to imagine you would be tempted to decline!" and added, "We do not understand this man. But he certainly was honest in his invitation. And then, if this sister should be as wonderful a woman as he is a man, why —"

"Why, what?" asked Osgood, bluntly.

"Oh, nothing much," said Maime. "I was just thinking a little, that was all."

CHAPTER XXXI.

IT was close upon the Neapolitan dinner hour when Dr. Carleton and his sister were ushered into such a reception hall as a vivid fancy might have pictured as the home of a sister of Ardavan. Almost instantly a Persian servant appeared, and, in very broken English, informed them that her mistress begged that they would forget formality, and present themselves at once. They followed the servant into a smaller room, even more elaborately furnished.

Reclining upon an Eastern divan, in an indistinct confusion of pillows, fanned by a Persian maid, sitting on a cushion at her feet, regaled from a case of perfumed cigarettes and a delicate decanter of sparkling wine, upon a glistening stand of Turkish mosaic, thus they found Zobeide, the sister of Ardavan. Within all this was Ardavan's face, in eyes and lips, and yet a face as different from Ardavan's as the east is from the west.

The skin was whiter than Ardavan's. Only a faint shadow of the Orient fell over her, marking the cheeks with the warm blood of that sunnier land; while her hair was as golden as the morning when it breaks over the Naples bay. The superb figure was clad in that matchless costume of the East, concealing only that it may betray. Just below the shoulders broad silver bands encased the arms, lustrous with

diamonds. Upon her fingers diamonds shone in silver settings, mocking the vain attempts of gold to do the jewels one half the justice they deserve. Tinkling sandals encased her feet; bands of embroidered gold-cloth, in braids, bound them over the delicate ankles. The melodious voice was just as one might have thought from hearing her brother speak; but the slight accent of Ardavan was scarcely perceptible in the words of Zobeide.

"Alas!" she said, "I fear I must disappoint you very much. My brother has gone to Rome. He said he did not dare to tell you he was going, for he wanted me to have the pleasure of seeing you, and he knew that you would not come to see me alone. He did not even tell me why he was going; and I was frightened, it was such an unusual thing to see him fettered with a wee bit of business, — he who hates the very word, say it in whatever language you will. But I noticed in a Roman paper this morning that the great Persian philosopher Ardavan was to deliver an address there, upon some terrible subject, on some incomprehensible occasion or other. I laughed when I read it, to think how raving that precious brother of mine will be when he sees it. Angry! — that word is not half strong enough! You must know how he hates anything which makes a pretence of being great in this little world, where the mightiest is so very, very small, — only a little handful of dust, caught up at a street corner by a passing breeze, to be dropped again at the next, and forever forgotten. But philosopher! Ah, there they have my proud

brother where he cannot creep away. For the veriest philosopher who ever lived and breathed is my boy Ardavan; though he hates the name like a bad picture. He has asked a Neapolitan nobleman to take his place at our table to-night. I see he is in the saloon. Pardon me if I send Philoah to have him introduced at once. Poor thing, she can understand nothing but Persian dialects, so you must excuse me."

She gave the order, and the Neapolitan was introduced. He was such a man as Ardavan might have been supposed to select as a friend, with dignity and sound value evident in every action; but, with all the characteristics true to the dictates of Naples, he immediately proceeded to devote himself as ardently to Maime as though they had been the nearest friends for years. Thus, through the dinner hour and hours that followed it in startling rapidity, Dr. Carleton found himself alone in the bewildering charms of Zobeide.

Morning was dawning in the east when the little company broke up, only too readily accepting an invitation to enjoy with their hostess her coach and four upon the Chiaja in the afternoon.

Osgood Carleton was ill at ease as they rode home. The perspiration on his brow was neither the effect of physical exertion nor dissipated by the morning breeze blowing in from the bay. Maime only added to the disturbance by saying, "Brother Osgood, in spite of the Occidental notions to which we are born and bred, I cannot help loving that beautiful woman.

She comes nearer to my heart than any woman I ever met, with a single exception."

Again, though strangely, perhaps, even as she spoke he was thinking more of that single exception than of the sister of Ardavan.

Doubtless Kittie Cosgrove had long before forgotten him ; and yet he remembered the revelation by the tomb of Zobeide in the plain of Bagdad. He remembered his word to Ardavan, "In the past, as to-day, I have loved but thee," and wondered if it were possible that this living Zobeide could possess the power to obliterate that memory.

In a maze of magnificent equipages, with Zobeide beside him, upon whom thousands of admiring eyes were turned, only devoting every thought and word to him ; with his sister's eager approval in every look, could one wonder that a memory which so long had lain in the mists of the past should fail to exert a restraining hand? He began to wonder why he had thought that fascination such a fearful thing. But more than once he caught his thoughts, and called them back to Naples. They were away climbing the hill by the cemetery. He was calmer than upon the night previous. He was more clear in his estimates. He realized that it would be but a natural impulse of the moment to fall upon his knees, and worship that dream of maddening beauty. And love her? Who that had a heart could fail? Yet, in calmness, he knew it would not be with his *whole* heart.

They left the carriage at their own door at last,

when Zobeide, who had waited till the last moment, much as her brother always waited, apparently that he might carry every point without discussion, turned suddenly to Maime, saying, "Indeed, we must meet again to-morrow. I shall never forgive my brother that he has kept me in unhappy ignorance so long. You must both go with me to the theatre to-morrow night. That is where my brother pointed you out to me. My box has been empty for two nights, now, and only thus will my friends there feel doubly repaid for an apparent lack of hospitality."

Maime glanced toward her brother. He hesitated. Zobeide turned upon him suddenly with a little laugh: —

"Do not fear that I shall disgrace you with a Persian costume. I only wear it to please my brother, and in my own domain. I shall be a sombre and sober Neapolitan woman to-morrow night. Good by till then," and she was driven away. It was precisely like Ardavan. She had not even waited for a reply.

"Of course we shall go," said Maime the next morning. But her brother shook his head. When beyond the presence of the enchantress he realized her power, with its great strength lying in the fact that she had evidently no possible desire to wield it over him.

"She asks us purely in deference to her brother, Maime," said Osgood, thoughtfully. "Now, if I should go there in precisely the same way, I think I should be a little more than mortal. Her beauty be-

wilders me. I do not see things in a calm, clear way, then."

"Well, if I were you, and had a chance like that, I'd just try if I could n't make her see things in the same light, and then —"

"Maime, why have n't you married a half-dozen fellows who have asked you in the last year?"

"Did n't love them, of course."

"Why of course?"

"Why, I loved some one else, you goose."

"Do you expect he will ever marry you?"

"Of course not, Osgood. Don't talk about that."

"I did n't mean to, Maime, but —"

Maime looked at her brother in astonishment for an instant. She had not imagined that he too was bearing a burden at the heart. She said no more, but went alone with Zobeide. She made the best excuses possible, and Zobeide apparently accepted them, till the last moment, as ever, during the applause following the last act. Then she leaned toward Maime, and whispered, "The American doctor did not come to-night, because I have offended him in some way. I have not desired to, and Ardavan will be very angry with me. I do not know all your customs. I have done wrong."

Maime earnestly assured her that it was false.

"I hope so," said Zobeide, faintly; "but Ardavan will be back again to-morrow, and unless your brother will come with you to dine I shall be sure that I am right."

Maime promised, and Dr. Carleton irresolutely obeyed.

Again he was alone with Zobeide, for Ardavan would not return till late in the evening. The lamp-light gleamed and flickered treacherously. Did he resolve or think of resolutions? One glance from Zobeide's flashing eyes made will a nonentity. Love? No, it was simply madness.

He knew it was madness; but as he smoked those fragrant cigarettes with her, as he sipped the fiery wine of the East from the tiny glass she held to his lips with those matchless fingers; as he sat upon the perfumed divan by her side, listening to her low laugh, and wondering how he came there,—in the ecstasy of that moment he was satisfied with madness. He could have clasped her to his heart, though death had been the penalty. He could have closed his eyes, and leaped into eternal tortures for a few paltry hours of such delirium. What did love signify?

Still he hesitated. Fortunately he had seen and heard enough of the customs of Persia to realize that Zobeide's intent was but to show every cordial hospitality to her brother's friends, and he hesitated in yielding to the madness which was overpowering him, because, at last, he had heard enough and seen enough of his own world, too, to know that one is not alone in making such a choice. Could Zobeide, beholding the world of nobility kneeling at her feet, be satisfied with him? And, were she satisfied, would it be with less than an entirety of love? It would be an outrage, an insult. No, he would not even think of it.

"My brother loves you," said Zobeide. "He

would be very angry with me if I did not love you too."

Love! Did Dr. Carleton pause at that moment to realize that doubtless Zobeide's imperfect acceptation of that word in English meant no more than admiration? Who in that bewildering ecstasy would have sought for such an antidote? A look, a word, an accident might have saved him; but the Persian cigarettes were too fragrant, the wine was too full of fire. And Zobeide! Had she no mercy? Could she not see?—she, the sister of Ardavan, guileless beyond a doubt, could she not comprehend? Or, wonder of wonders, did she mean what she was saying?

"You are like Ardavan. You are, except Ardavan, the first who ever made me love. I think you have taught me what love is."

She said it precisely as she would have said it to Maime; precisely as Ardavan would have announced some new discovery among Babylonish tombs. But could mortal man remain in cold philosophy at such a time? Dr. Carleton saw but the flashing eyes, heard but the words in that musical cadence, felt all the passion which another might have said Zobeide lacked, swelling, bursting his veins. But in the madness of that moment he knew himself as never before. He understood, at last, what Guy had said to him. He knew well that if he were away from her, even in another room, the charms of Zobeide would lack something of their power. He looked at her; one of heaven's most beautiful creations; and, with indignation greater than the passion of his heart, his soul

rebuked him that he should offer to it such a valtry sacrifice.

"Zobeide, Zobeide!" he said, in a voice that trembled with a struggle against himself, "I do not know if I understand what you are saying." He was upon his knee before her, clasping her hand. "I do not understand you. No, no! Say that I do not. I have acted falsely with you, if I do. I did not dream that one so great and beautiful could love me. O Zobeide! do not look at me in anger. I am unworthy of your love, but I am not a brute. I say it late, but Heaven forgive me! It is better now than to deceive you. I loved a woman, once, Zobeide; I loved her with all my heart. I did not know it. I was false to her, and left her for another more beautiful. My heart went back to her too late. It has clung to that memory with a love which will not die again. Yes, yes, Zobeide! I will bear that look of scorn from you before I will mangle your life with mine, which is not worthy."

They had both risen to their feet while he was speaking. Here Zobeide turned sharply away from him, and, with a groan, he sank upon the deserted divan, and buried his face in his hands.

Then suddenly and noiselessly Zobeide turned again, bent over him for an instant, and above his head made several mysterious passes, which Persian magicians know so well, and of which even Americans have lately learned something, just enough to make a mystery of it and call it the mesmeric art. For a moment there was no effect upon the bowed

head, but gradually the labored breathing grew regular and low, the muscles relaxed, and the hands fell from the forehead, and lay upon the pillow.

"He sleeps," Zobeide whispered, gently placing his head in a more comfortable position. "He has forgotten all. Ah! would that no rude waking might drown delusion and corrode the glistening tinsel of each golden dream."

She softly locked the door leading to the saloon where Maime was so carefully allowing the Neapolitan to detain her. She bent again over the sleeping form, lifted one helpless hand, kissed it, and laid it gently back again upon the pillow.

"You are not like all men. No, you are not like the world," she whispered. "I love you for that. But sleep on. It is not time to wake. My love shall not trouble you. It shall but live on in your heart, and make you happier all your life, because Zobeide loves you."

She lit a twisted taper, low behind a screen, looked at a tiny watch ticking and telling the hours, though no larger than a modest seal, set in one of her rings.

"The Rome train must be in," she said, and, extinguishing the swinging lamp, she left the room. The taper behind the crimson screen shed a soft glow, like a distant sunset over the apartment.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A MOMENT later Dr. Carleton was silently but suddenly roused. It was not like one waking from sleep, but wholly and entirely in an instant. He recalled everything that had passed, but not as though any time had elapsed. The voice of Zobeide still sounded in his ears. Yet something bewildered him, for it was saying, "And make you happier all your life, because Zobeide loves you." She had not said it. He was sure of it, and yet he knew that she had said it. He sprang to his feet. A shadow stood among the shadows, with folded arms, before him. It was just where Zobeide had been standing an instant past. The strange, red light bewildered him too. But he exclaimed, —

"O Zobeide, Zobeide! Let me go, and forget that I ever existed. Would to God that I were worthy of your love, but I am not! No, I am not! Forgive me! I shall suffer more than you."

"Has the American doctor finished speaking?"

Dr. Carleton started back. It was not the voice of Zobeide. He looked again in the crimson shadows.

"Ardavan! You, Ardavan!" he exclaimed, with a shudder. "I have taken a miserable part here during your absence."

"Yes?" replied the artist, without a motion. "Has

the American doctor been false? False to a friend of the salt?"

Dr. Carleton looked steadily in his eyes, and replied, "No, Ardavan, I have not been false. I have been weak, foolish, mistaken, and unkind."

"I left my sister with the wish that she show every possible politeness to the Americans. Did the American doctor take advantage of a liberty she could never have bestowed but at my command, and to one whom I introduced, as further from the petty foibles of this world than heaven is from earth? Did the American doctor find a heart opened wide to do a brother's will, and did he make an entrance there himself, and when it was made, where never man had found his way before, did he not then throw the heart again upon the ground, and say, 'No! It is no place for me to rest. I do not wish it after all?'"

What meant these accusations? How had Ardavan come into the room? When had Zobeide gone? These things and many more bewildered Dr. Carleton. He wondered if that of which he felt conscious was the reality, or if in some strange unconsciousness he had been guilty of more than he knew.

"Ardavan, I cannot answer you," he said slowly. "Was I drunken with your wine?"

"It is impossible! Our Persian wine is spiced to please the palate, it does not bite the brain."

"Was I maddened by the cigarettes?"

"They can but make the body languid; they cannot set the soul on fire."

"Then, Ardavan, if I have done all that you accuse

me of, I—I—I do not know. But this I do know, Ardavan: you are unjust to me, and I can show it to you now." He began to grow excited, and spoke with an earnestness which no events of life had before discovered in him. "I did not throw her heart away. She is more beautiful, more talented, more pleasing, and more brilliant than any woman I ever saw. She is a true woman. No one with the fibre of a man in his being could look into her eyes and doubt. Heaven help the man who has not soul enough to work well to win a prize like that! And, more than that, I swear to you, upon my honor, Ardavan, that I have no hope, no thought that ever in my life I shall meet again the woman I love. This is all, Ardavan. I simply know that never while I live can I love another woman as I have and as I do love *her*. Yes, that is all. I tried to say so to your sister when I found how her beauty had bewildered me. For cursed be he who would lay at such an altar a life that is marred with a single flaw! Ardavan, you know, perhaps, better than I, what I have said and done. I cannot tell. But as you say I have been false to you, I will at least prove my regret. I place myself in your hands, Ardavan. You are angry with me. It does not matter. Tell me what to do, and I give you my word, Ardavan, it shall be done."

"Think of the matter to-night," said Ardavan, "and in the morning make the heart's confession that you love my sister, or else such an explanation as would best befit a gentleman, either in Occident or Orient. You must excuse my sister from seeing our guests

again. And as for me, I am trodden under superstitions and dread to see a friend simply to send him from the house. There is no need that they be told that I have returned."

Ardavan bowed, but his lips did not part in a smile, and his hands remained folded across his breast. Dr. Carleton left the house, feeling painfully guilty, and yet satisfied that he had done wisely in turning when he did, even though a greater wisdom might have guided him earlier in the same direction.

In the morning, as Zobeide reclined upon a dainty little divan in her luxurious boudoir, the Persian Philoah handed her a note. Her hand trembled a little as she opened it, and read: —

"TO MADEMOISELLE ZOBEIDE: Were I the truest gentleman, perhaps I should come myself with such an apology as would be most fitting a true gentleman. But I am slow to think and hard to speak. In a beautiful dream, so exquisite that I almost forgot it could be real, I became enraptured in your perfect blending of all that man admires. Others have yielded before. I alone was unfortunate, that, in the madness of the moment, I did not dream that I was laying up an agony for any but myself. I deceived myself, I deceived you, I deceived your brother. I am leaving for America, bitterly to repent the last three days, so long as life remains; as intensely as I enjoyed them. And your brother, too, who has been to me and mine as sunrise in a bitter storm, as water in the desert, he too thinks me

false. Speak to him for me. Speak to yourself for me. Say that 'to err is human; to forgive, divine.'"

Zobeide folded the letter, and thrust it under her embroidered girdle with a little, rippling laugh.

"At last!" she murmured, as she threw herself back upon the perfumed pillows.

"At last, what?" asked the Persian Philoah.

"Oh, nothing much," replied Zobeide, carelessly; "I have found, at last, a man who will not love me. That is all."

The pretty Persian maid shrugged her plump shoulders and laughed, but evidently she did not believe it possible.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

PARIS was reached on their homeward journey. Dr. Carleton stood by the great fountain in the Place de la Concorde, restlessly whiling away the time which Maime required to devote to the frivolities of art with Parisian costumers. He was watching a little lame boy perambulate around the square. About to throw his life into the details of his deserted profession, he took more interest, accordingly, in the weaknesses which the art he really loved was calculated to relieve.

A hand was laid upon his shoulder. Once more it was Ardavan. This time Dr. Carleton shuddered, but Ardavan laughed, and said carelessly, —

“I saw you standing here, and came across. You ran away from Naples without saying farewell, though you were about to put the globe between us. Is that American? An Oriental friend of the salt will not be so easily forgotten.”

Dr. Carleton eagerly grasped the offered hand, exclaiming, “I did not come to say farewell, because I feared you would not wish me to.”

“And all because you would not love my sister. You Americans are the most curious people I ever saw.”

“Ardavan,” said the doctor, earnestly, “why will you mistake me? I could have laid my life at the

feet of Zobeide, satisfied if she would but use it as a footstool."

"That makes it still a little more curious."

"Did you never love?" Dr. Carleton asked, abruptly.

For a moment Ardavan seemed almost taken off his guard. But the next, with a scornful laugh, he answered, "Yes. I have loved. I knew a lady once; an American lady, too, now that I think of it. She had very queer ideas of love. She seemed utterly indifferent as to whether I loved one woman or another, or whether she loved one or another, or who loved her. She said that somewhere in this great world there must be some one whom God intended for some one else (though I cannot see that gods, either pagan or Christian, have any real right to meddle in our mortal love affairs). But she said that till the two thus intended found each other, they had much better live alone. That was what she was doing, and what she intended to do till she found herself in love beyond redemption. What an absurdity such a system would make of life! How much better the old Oriental system!" He smiled, scornfully. "It was nonsense to think of loving her deeply. I had no time. She gave me this token once." He pointed to a quaint circle of gold, alone upon one finger. The setting was curiously wrought, and down in the depths of it flashed a brilliant diamond. "She told me that a sacred chalcedony was missing that once fitted over the setting, and that upon the two there was written the secret of all hap-

piness and unhappiness in love. She was an absurd creature. Yes, I have loved, once and only once." Again the lips parted in that incomprehensible smile, but Dr. Carleton was too engrossed to notice it.

"It is very strange," he said, "but I once met such a lady as you describe, and she gave me, too, a charm; a sacred chalcedony." He opened a complicated seal ring upon his finger, disclosing the treasure encased within. With an exclamation of delight Ardavan lifted the creamy stone from its hiding-place, and gazed for an instant spell-bound by the drops of blood as they floated in its depths.

"I have harbored an angel unawares," he muttered, as if to himself, "and only by this mysterious dealing of destiny I discover the blessing which he brings."

"It is only a chance resemblance," said Dr. Carleton, anxiously.

Ardavan looked up with a sudden and piercing glance. "Was it she? The one of whom you told me? The one you loved?"

"No, no! I did not mean that, Ardavan. I surely thought for the moment that I loved her. She was most lovable. But she did not for a moment love me, I assure you, and she taught me a most excellent lesson, too, when —"

He paused abruptly; for, before his astonished eyes, he saw the gem which he had treasured slip, with hardly the pressure of a finger, into the quaint circle about the diamond.

"Look! What a lovely ring! See! It is perfect," cried Ardavan in ecstasy. "But come, let us go to yonder lapidary's, and read the wonderful secret together before we part."

This was not the first time that Osgood Carleton had found no alternative but to obey. They secured the glass, and, one word from the diamond setting, one from the rim about the chalcedony, Ardavan read:—

"Who seeks the diamond in a market-place?
The costliest pearl can but its setting grace.
The bud we nurture blooms in rare device,
The flower, forgotten, fades in paradise."

A foolish sentiment for all this fury," said Ardavan, scornfully. Then looking up with a mocking laugh, he added, "Methinks she was making sport of both of us."

"You are scoffing,—you are cruel!" replied Dr. Carleton.

"I am not scoffing, I am only disappointed," said Ardavan; "but if there be a lesson there which you have yet to learn, why, take the ring. Keep it. Wear it. Profit by it. Ardavan will be well satisfied."

Dr. Carleton stood looking at the ring as it lay in his palm, unable to speak for a moment. Then his voice was hardly firm, as he replied,—

"No, Ardavan, I cannot keep it,—neither the whole nor the part. I have bitterly returned to you and yours the kindness you bestowed on us. By

the terms on which the chalcedony was given me, I should have no right to part with it to another, but here I am sure I have the right. Take it with the ring, and in exchange give me the good-will I have forfeited."

Ardavan laughed and shook his head. "I have no use for the ring, and no memories that shall be unpleasant. The American doctor's heart and sentiments are very good. The American fashion of setting them out is very bad. It makes life a fierce struggle, and love a frightful phantom or a wanton debauchery. Think less on it, either to fear or court it, and it will think the more of you. One needs not love the woman he admires. One needs must worship the woman whom he loves. In thinking every thrill of sentiment a throb of love, one drives himself from the enjoyment of many a happy hour by shunning it, or degrades himself with evil, by dallying in that which he believes to be a vice. To worship God is evil to him who evil thinks. While love in the human heart is the highest, purest, holiest motive of which that heart is capable. I speak as the pagan that I am, perhaps; but I think I speak honestly. Truth, Liberty, Love, the three graces of time and eternity, well understood and vitalized, would make this world Olympia! The paradise of Indra! Heaven! We are parting, perhaps never to meet again; but I shall never forget the American doctor, and the American doctor will sometimes remember Ardavan. If the memory of our meetings be as sweet to you as it will ever be to me, then,

like this sky above us, it will be a dome of spotless, pure delight; and if by chance the memory of one hour come up, like yonder little cloud upon the horizon, 't will be like that, a silvern shimmer, beautiful though it break the blue, because it draws a contrast that but makes the rest more redolent and real. Be happy, my friend, in the thought that Zobeide has loved you! For, now that it is past, she too is happy in that thought."

A moment's pause, a choking at the throat, and Ardavan was gone. Whither? Who can tell?

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CARLETON Cottage and its lovely lawn welcomed the returning wanderers. It had fallen a little toward decay in the hands of disinterested tenants ; but still it was a place for which they found no equal ; not even amid the pleasures of Naples or the palaces of Persia. The June roses were blushing, but it was a cold and rainy June morning. In their six-and-thirty months of uninterrupted summer time, the travellers had become unaccustomed to a chill, and two or three charred logs burned slowly, after the fashion of the good old times, in the great fireplace in the hall, filling the room with cheering light and piny odors. They had been but a short time in their old home, and there was too much distracting work to be attended to to admit of Dr. Carleton's entering at once upon the confining duties of his profession. What he did he did with all his might, and he had no intention of undertaking anything till he was fully prepared to devote himself to it in such a way that he should force it to succeed upon his hands. Hence he was sitting, this damp June morning, in one of our angular American easy-chairs, and restfully smoking his cigar in close proximity to the great open fire.

How the shadows come and go between the white smoke of a cigar and the glowing under-coals, down among the embers ! What a time for the spirits of

the lost, the unforgotten in the past, to wander back again! How we live over and over again the long, long ago, in a great open fireplace! O Memory! what a fiend and what a friend!

As Osgood Carleton sat there, he seemed to sink away from the grand old hall into something very like a disembodied spirit, looking down upon one of earth's panoramas of the past. Far in the distance, in the deep recesses of the glowing coals, he saw the figure of a youth slowly wending his way toward him, wandering aimlessly, and yet ever progressing, through pastures green and beautiful. The fragrance of the day and hour were all-absorbing. The youth stooped and picked a little bud, and placed it in his bosom. A little farther on he came slowly past a cultivated garden. There the flowers seemed to bloom more brilliantly for the care that was bestowed upon them, and again he picked a bud and placed it by the other, crushing the first to make room for it. But as he wandered on, the frailer beauty of the artificial flower faded and sank away until it lay absorbed in the greater strength of the first.

The youth had passed beyond the pastures now, and out of the distant and uncertain shadows of the fading flicker. He was hurrying on, through a well-kept park, in one of the busy walks of the city. Life began to assume a tenure that was real and earnest. He passed a little vender with the same variety of flower,—a little wider blown and a little lighter colored, indicating still greater care. He bought it, and hastily would have placed it by the others and over

both of them ; for there was no room in the vest for more than one such glowing, bursting bud. But, as he struggled, in his haste to thrust it into its place, the delicate flower fell from its stem, and only a thorn beneath it remained to pierce his finger ; yet, as it fell, it did not seem to reach the ground, but only to become absorbed in the first little bud that gathered from it all the glory it possessed, and became even more beautiful. And now the wanderer's way lay through the market-place, and then in a still drearier quarter, where filth and poverty seemed all alone in their squalor and repulsiveness. But though the flower upon his vest had gathered from the others all their magnificence, the youth seemed too absorbed to pay it a moment's thought. Then suddenly he turned his steps down another street, where the way seemed lined with the stands and booths of flower-venders. The most extravagantly gorgeous of earth's exotics were spread in a dazzling profusion, bewildering the eyes the more as they seemed to spring into life from such gloomy surroundings. Again the youth beheld the same variety of bud that he had found, first in the pasture-field, then in the garden, and then in the park. But now, having felt the force of the florist's utmost attentions in some great green-house, where the sun of the tropics was brought to it, the artificial exuberance and the wondrous beauty it had attained were so immeasurably greater than anything he had beheld before, that, though it had stood in a vase alone, as the most costly of all the flowers that were exhibited, he purchased it with a random and reckless

extravagance. In ecstasy he held it in his fingers, and inhaled its wonderful fragrance. He bent his head, and, with a touch so delicate that waxen petals could not have felt its force, he attempted to put it in the place where the others had rested. His eyes fell upon the little bud that long had lain almost forgotten there. He started back, and looked again. Flush and flush, glory and glory, fragrance and fragrance, seemed wandering with bewildering uncertainty between the bud upon his bosom and the blossom in his hand. From one to the other his eyes turned in wonder, till, as if touched by a finger of magic, the flower in his hand grew paler and less fragrant. He turned to give it back to the vender, when lo ! it was only the little bud from the pasture, and the flower at his breast had disappeared. The vender looked at it and shook his head.

"When it blooms you'll find it fairer than you think," he said. "Brightest in bud is not always best in bloom. Keep it, keep it ! It will do better with you than with me, if you deal fairly by it."

Slowly the youth rose up out of the embers, and seated himself in the great angular easy-chair before the fire, repeating, as though it were a moral impressed upon him in his morning walk, a rhyme of no great purity or depth of verse, but with a meaning after all : —

"Who seeks the diamond in a market-place?
The costliest pearl can but its setting grace.
The bud we nurture blooms in rare device;
The flower, forgotten, fades in paradise."

"What is that you are saying?" asked Maime, running merrily down the broad stairs, as in these old days — not very long ago.

"Nothing, nothing ; or that is, not very much," her brother replied, starting, to realize that he himself sat in the great easy-chair, and looking, instinctively, to see if he had a bud in his button-hole.

The clouds had disappeared, and the sun shone in all the brilliancy of a true June day ; and not to dispel the vision, but to think upon it, he wandered slowly over the green lawn, and on to the gate upon the street. Over the hill he saw the cemetery, and marked the cluster of trees beside the tomb, which he so well remembered.

"Yes," he said thoughtfully, "that is where I found the bud which has become so dear to me in my neglect. I wonder if the graves are still cared for. If not, I will do the work myself. Possibly it may be a slight atonement."

Another week went by. In the mean time he had often leaned upon that gate and looked toward the cemetery, gathering courage, but not yet venturing. Again and again Maime had seen him there, and again and again she said to herself, "There's something brewing in brother Osgood's brain ; and I'll bet a cent, Maime Carleton, that I know what it is."

CHAPTER XXXV.

FROM one of those reveries upon the gate Dr. Carleton was roused by the rapid beating of a horse's hoofs upon the hard road. It was not the delicate canter of a cradle-like saddle-horse, upon which a lady or a coward might be supposed to ride, but the sharp and steady tread of a powerful animal, rapidly lessening the distance between them. Instinctively the admirer of fine horses turned his head, sure of something worthy a glance, when, to his surprise, he discovered a lady magnificently mounted, and closely veiled. Dr. Carleton looked with admiring eyes; for she was perfect master of the saddle, and only started from the lethargy when, directly opposite the gate, she reigned the animal in so suddenly that for an instant he almost rested on his haunches.

"You must have been away," the lady said. "Strange faces have greeted me when I passed the cottage. I wanted to thank you for your hospitality when I was ill here, and I wondered when you were coming back, for I felt very lonesome without my little chalcedony. Have you kept it, or lost it, or given it away?"

In his astonishment and confusion at thus suddenly meeting the owner of the ring, Dr. Carleton forgot the first requirements of hospitality; forgot even a friendly greeting; and, hat in hand, standing beside

the restive horse, he simply replied, "I have it still. If I return it to you as you gave it, will —"

"Oh, sir, I did not give it," she interrupted him, with a low laugh. "I simply loaned it, with a condition upon which you might give it away."

"You are right, Miss Ashley," he replied; "I was only going to ask you to let me see the other half of the charm before I parted with the half I have treasured so carefully."

"You might have asked something less difficult, Dr. Carleton," the lady replied; "for I have done with the ring precisely what I advised you to do with the chalcedony."

"You have given it to one you love?" asked Dr. Carleton in amazement.

"I have," she answered, frankly. "And, more than that, to the first, the last, the only one I ever loved."

Dr. Carleton's face flushed as he thought of the careless heart of Ardavan, and of the reckless way in which he had robbed him of a treasure so dearly bestowed. "Pardon me!" he exclaimed. "I have done a cruel thing in deceiving you. It was because I thought you might have parted with it carelessly, and that I had a surprise for you." He took the ring from his finger, which had been concealed under his hat.

The lady grasped it eagerly in her gloved fingers.

"Ah!" she cried, "my own dear little gem, how I have missed you!"

"I thank you!" she said, turning again to Dr. Carleton. "Give my love and my thanks to your

sister. I shall see her soon." And, touching the horse, she was off again as she came, leaving Dr. Carleton more bewildered than ever. He was unaccountably annoyed by the incident, especially when he remembered the way in which Ardavan had spoken; and, more for quiet contemplation than because he had previously resolved to go there, he turned toward the God's-acre lying over the hill. Wandering without intention, he stood at last before the two low slabs bearing the name "Cosgrove." The spot had hardly changed, even in evidence of constant attention. A fresh wreath lay upon each lonely grave, and flowers freshly planted were between them. Calla lilies were growing upon the spot which he had indicated seven years before. The rose-bush had flourished as he prophesied, and had been carefully pruned since it put out its spring leaves. At least she had not forgotten him.

For two weeks he watched the graves, and waited.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AT last she came, in a little pony phaeton, as before. He knew that it must be she. He remembered the great sun-hat she had worn. It might almost be the very same which she was still wearing. It was twisted over her head, and almost covered her chin. No wonder he did not remember the color of her hair. He waited, concealed in the shrubbery.

He had learned to look deeply enough into human faces now, and he wondered, as he thought how superficial his first investigation had been. Seriously he asked himself, "Have I been dreaming, all these years, that I loved a woman whose face I could not have recognized upon the street? A fool! Am I dreaming still?"

Kittie Cosgrove bent over the lilies first, and sprinkled them from an antique vessel in which she had brought water from the fountain below. And the thoughts of the watcher went back to the dream of Ardavan; the angel, and the lilies. She turned. For an instant he saw her face. A thrill of strange ecstasy and recognition throbbed in his veins. Unwittingly he had looked beneath that sun-hat, after all; and now that he looked again he found that, unknown to him, each feature had been deeply imprinted upon his heart. With a sigh of relief he

muttered, "No! I was not following a phantom, after all."

Slowly now he approached the enclosure, and leaned upon the paling, just as he had leaned there seven years before. There was a strange mingling of determination and dread at his heart. He had fought hard battles with himself for Kittie Cosgrove, never doubting himself or his love for her after he had once discovered it. Now, in a sudden tremor, he began to wonder if it were really Kittie Cosgrove, after all, or only some ideal, which in his imperfect appreciation she had represented, that he loved.

"Good morning," he ventured faintly, for she seemed too much engaged to notice him. She looked at him as though he were a stranger, yet he felt himself irresistibly drawn toward her, even in that passionless glance. At least it was neither scorn nor anger.

For a moment he stood there, bewildered. That strange face which had fascinated him at the hospital seemed looking from beneath the sun-hat. The lips were thin, and proudly curved. The eyes were black and lustrous. She spoke. The illusion passed away, and again it was Kittie Cosgrove. But the voice was as musical as Zobeide's.

"Good morning, sir," she said, in a very low and indifferent way, and turned to her work again.

There was little encouragement in that. He stood irresolutely for a moment, almost ready to turn away, and say that it was not the one, the only one, — simply a delusion! This, after all the struggle through

which he had assured himself that, if he could but return to this first love, life would at once assume the balance it had lost, discomfiture would vanish, and the world be bright again. There he stood, wondering if, after all, the charms of Carrie Ashley or her cousin could not still possess the power to turn him. His thoughts even carried him back to Naples. Were this humble, simple woman his wife, could he look upon Zobeide and remain ever true to the little country girl? He had seen too much of the mockery of marriage to wish to run a risk or try an experiment.

But it suddenly occurred to this constitutionally preoccupied mortal that he was basing all these comparisons upon the brightest and best of those who had enchanted him, against the crown of a sun-hat simply; for that was what his eyes were fixed upon. Before he became too intensely determined, he concluded to look once more beneath it.

"You do not remember me, miss," he said, in the hope of gaining a little time for study, and a little better ground to think upon.

"You planted this rose-bush, I believe," she replied, without looking up.

"Good heavens!" he groaned, "is that the way she remembers?"

"It grows well," he said aloud. "It pays more respect to my memory than its mistress."

"Did you take care of what you planted, that it remembers you?" she asked, as she softened the earth about the rose-bush.

It was a sharp thrust; but, knowing he deserved it,

Dr. Carleton found something like pleasure in the blow. He was not thinking of the rose-bush, as he replied, —

“No, I did not. And I have suffered bitterly for my forgetfulness. Experience has been a savage teacher, but at last it has brought me back again to start life over if I may.”

“I understand you, sir,” said Kittie Cosgrove, leaning back against the cold marble. “You acted falsely to me. You told me lies! You broke a poor girl’s heart for sport. You have revelled in the world since then; and now, wearied of its brighter pleasures, you have come back to me to see if the wound is healed. Yes, thank you! It is quite well again, and the rose-bush can flourish without your care.”

She had looked steadily in his face while she spoke, and in spite of her words his heart throbbed with strange delight.

He answered her eagerly and solemnly: “You are right to accuse me; I acted falsely. God forgive me! But it was only to myself that I lied when I was false to you.” With every word his fears reacted in assurance that, after all, this *was* the reality, and he added earnestly: “I come back to you in shame, begging forgiveness without deserving it; but I come stronger for past weakness, and wiser for folly, and able, I trust, to be true to that which has always been most dear to me. Forgive me, forgive me!” He could not have told how he came there, but he was surely kneeling on the grass before the orphan

girl. He had forgotten that a moment before he was uncertain whether he loved her.

"You may be speaking truly, sir," she said, in the same indifferent tone; "but, though a woman can justify all else in man, she finds it hard to fit herself to the foibles of the heart. On that gravestone over there, there is an epitaph which long interested me. It has often made me think that I was doubtless better to be free."

Dr. Carleton leaned on the fence, and, upon a slab in the next section, down among the weeds and low grasses, he read: —

"Who seeks the diamond in the market-place?
The costliest pearl can but its setting grace.
The bud we nurture blooms in rare device.
The flower, forgotten, fades in paradise."

Without apparently noticing his silence, Kittie Cosgrove added, "When a woman gives her heart to a man, he justly expects the whole of it; but it has been my misfortune to know only of men who wore theirs like their overcoats."

"I have learned that lesson in hard experience," replied Dr. Carleton. "It would be far easier for me to appreciate than to be worthy of your love."

"How? Unworthy of a poor girl's love!"

"I have had money without end all my life!" exclaimed Dr. Carleton, almost angrily. "I have wealth that I do not know what to do with. But I am poor. You have no money, but you have, to me, a wealth which all the gold of earth could not procure for me."

Kittie Cosgrove smiled. "I am not poor, sir; do not pity me. I am quite independent, I assure you."

"You may be rich or poor," he replied. "It matters nothing to me, for it is you! You! It is Kittie Cosgrove whom I love, who has lived in my life these seven years past, giving me more joy and sorrow than all the rest of life together."

Again she smiled. "You are taking me in ignorance. You would not wish me if you —"

"Believe me! Believe me! It is love for you! You as you are! Not as you have been, not as you may be, just what you are, that brings me back to you from all the world beside. I was ignorant before. I loved you, but the world tempted, and I fell for a moment from the clear realization of the love. But when the world has spent its force at last, when I know it, from end to end, all that there is in it, see! I turn from it. Of my own will I turn to a temptation beside which there is no charm in all the world. I come to you. From the day when I saw you first you have been my life. Others have bewildered me, but in truth it was because they made me think of you. It is not my strength, but my good fortune, that I have escaped. But having escaped, I see the whole, and know that it is you. I loved you then. I love you now, I shall love you while I live, — you and you alone! Reject me, as unworthy, if I cannot prove myself what I am; if you do not love me; if you will not be my wife. But you will. You do, you must believe me."

"Wait," said Kittie Cosgrove seriously, — "wait

till I have told you all of what I am. Then you will know better if I, instead, am worthy to accept and able to hold a true man's love. Come, sit under the shadow of these trees, for it is a long story ; and, by the sacred dead about us, I promise to tell you truly, and to tell you all."

There was something in her manner that defied reply, and Dr. Carleton obeyed. As he threw himself upon the ground at her feet, instinctively he thought of Zobeide. But he no longer wondered if there could be a dangerous temptation there. The comparison already tempted him to this rather than that.

"My father and mother went from here to California when they were married. My father became very rich. They both died there when I was a little girl, leaving me in the care of an aunt. Their bodies were brought to the East, but I was to remain in California till I came into possession of the property. My aunt was a widow, Mrs. Ashley, and I was so young that I grew up to call her mother ; and, when we came to the East, to save so many explanations to the strangers we must meet, I took her name. The first and dearest spot I found was this burial-ground, and then I found you here the very second time I came. My aunt lived in terrible fear that some one, looking for my wealth, would deceive me into marriage, so we came and remained here as though we were poor. It is much the pleasantest place and the loveliest way to live. I seemed to love you from the moment that we began to talk together. But you were wrong about

the lilies. They would have done better somewhere else. I have only kept them there out of respect to your error. I told you that my mother was buried here, and you called me Miss Cosgrove. Every one else called me Miss Ashley. I told you my first name was Kit. It was a name my friends in California had given me. You made Kittie of it. No one else ever called me that. I loved you, and I thought that you loved me, and I knew you thought me poor. I had hard work to keep your sister from finding out all about me; but it sharpened my wits, as you shall see. My aunt was not satisfied. She said it might be that you would love me, thinking I was poor, but that if another who was rich should come you would leave me again. When we went to the city for the winter I yielded to her advice, and had my heart broken to pay for it. Catherine is my real name. Kate, my aunt called me, for she was a stern Puritan, but all the rest of my friends called me Carrie. You did not see in Carrie Ashley the little Kit Cosgrove whose poverty had tempted you to bring flowers to this grave."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Dr. Carleton.

"It is as true as that I stand here."

"But Carrie Ashley married Sir Edgar, and he murdered her."

"It is true I married him. He pleased my aunt, and I had faith enough in you to promise her that if you should be so false to Kit Cosgrove as to offer to marry Carrie Ashley, I would accept Sir Edgar. It is true, too, that he thought he had murdered me; but

he failed, simply because I did not die. I had one good friend beside me when the fire broke out. It was a great, dumb dog. I do not know how he did it, for I was unconscious ; but in some way he got me out of the window, and I fell into the deep snow below. It roused me, but, still unconscious of what I was doing, I gained my feet and ran. Sir Edgar had hired a man and a woman to do the deed. The man was in the hall watching the door, and he perished in the flames. The woman was stationed outside to watch the window. She had a soft spot down in her cruel heart. She saw the leap, and took the unconscious victim into safe-keeping and pity. God bless her ! She atoned for the past in what she suffered afterward to prevent Sir Edgar from marrying your sister. She failed in that, but she freed her, after all. It was she whom you found in Sir Edgar's clutches and rescued. Poor creature ! She died in the hospital a little while after you left America for Florence."

Kittie Cosgrove breathed a long, tremulous sigh, as though the journey through the past were a hard one to take. Dr. Carleton lay silently at her feet. She continued : —

"Dr. Carleton, I still loved you. I could not help it. But to be true with you, though I never thought a time would come when I should acknowledge such a love, I did not think you worthy of it. When I recovered from a long illness that followed my escape, I found that my aunt had returned from Europe only after hearing of my death. I had made a will, leaving

all my property to her ; and, sooner than wake the old horrors, I assumed another character, and lived on with my aunt as before. But I was restless. I was almost wild. I feared I was becoming insane. The doctors said I was dying of consumption, but I laughed at them. Partly because I must have some occupation, and partly because I would be nearer to you, I obtained the position of nurse in the army, and was stationed in Washington. I heard of you in the hospital at Baltimore, and went there. I was so changed by that brutal suffering that I had no fear of recognition. Yet more than once when I was standing looking at you in your sleep, I unconsciously made you dream of Carrie Ashley, and think of Kittie Cosgrove ; and I knew by what you said in your dreams that you loved one or the other of them, and I wondered which."

Dr. Carleton started, in the revery in which he had been following her, much as he sometimes started in those dreams. Kittie Cosgrove looked at him, and with a low laugh added, shaking her head, "Yes, and then you showed me that you loved Kate Ashley, even after you had loved those other two. Can you imagine the agony it cost me, when it made me think that you, whom I worshipped, were yielding in that way to every interesting face you met?"

Suddenly the disclosure to which he was silently listening seemed to break in its full force upon Dr. Carleton's bewildered mind. He sprang to his feet. "But the ring!" he exclaimed.

"It did you no harm," she replied, half smiling.

"A poor lapidary and gold beater, who had a large family and was out of work, made it for me. I got up the design myself, and I made it elaborate; for I wanted him to earn his living for some time without taking it as a charity. Then I had the epitaph on yonder gravestone written upon it. He did his work well. Don't you think so?"

"But you told me that you gave that ring to one whom you loved!" said Dr. Carleton, reproachfully, without heeding her question.

"I told you more," she replied, "and that I gave it to the only one I ever loved."

"And now you have told me that you loved me!" Dr. Carleton exclaimed, almost angrily.

Kittie Cosgrove smiled, and in the same low voice that had held him in the mysterious spell so long, she replied: "In the Place de la Concorde, in Paris, just beyond the lapidary's, I gave that ring to you."

"Great heavens!" cried Osgood Carleton.

But instantly the little orphan girl continued, "You did not heed the promise that you made to me that your sister should not marry Sir Edgar. I trusted you. Had I not, that marriage would never have taken place. I knew nothing about it till it was over. I was preparing to enter that terrible prison again, when your sister made her escape. I followed her, for I knew that she was inexperienced, and that she had taken with her as a maid a woman whom I distrusted as a hireling of Sir Edgar's. She sailed for Europe, and I went too. Unknown to her, I was always near her till she settled in Florence. I was

wearied with the world, and deceived into almost trusting in that wretched maid. I thought, too, that it could not be possible that you could long leave your sister unguarded; and, securing a friend who would keep me posted, I took a part of that unfortunate fortune and buried myself in Bagdad. I went as a man. A woman would have been disgraced and dishonored to have ventured there or anywhere unguarded. Such is the nobility of those who fall down and worship us!"

She said it with a scornful circumflex and a mocking laugh that could have come from no lips but those of Ardavan. It was easy to recognize it now. "A year went by," she continued. "I learned the language, improved in painting, and supported myself in such luxury as demanded for me respect and protection. I went back to Europe for a little while, and there in England I saw Sir Edgar Stanley. He did not see me, but I learned that he was searching for his wife. I feared he might find her, and I knew that you could not or would not. I dared not face you, and tell you all. I dared not write you; for I thought you must know, and that you were angry. I came to America. I found you living in a hotel. I hired myself there as waiting-maid; and, in less than a week, when I was wondering how I could approach you, I found a letter on your table from your sister. It had been delayed in some way, and then I understood it all. So the next morning I found a way to tell you your sister was in Florence, and sent you on your way. I had done all I could,

and went back to Bagdad. But Sir Edgar was before you. He met that maid in Florence, and made an arrangement with her to keep him posted, all the while, as to where your sister went, that he might be near her continually. He would not have harmed her; he simply meant to annoy her till she should pay him all her money. Sir Edgar would gladly have left her to starve to death, I assure you. Later, in the city of Bagdad, to my unutterable surprise, I met Sir Edgar upon the pontoon bridge. Fortunately I was in my palanquin, and he did not see me. I knew there was mischief. I covered my face and hands with Persian dye. I met him, and by gold and flattery I made him my friend; yes, not only my friend, but my slave. I learned from him that you were coming. He knew the very boat. He had made arrangements to have it stopped below the city, and to have you come on at night by mules. I pretended to assist him, and persuaded him to have his treasure brought to my house. He brought your sister and the maid, but said you were not with them. I had spoken only in the North Persian dialect with him. He understood it well, and had no idea that I understood English. He felt safe in leaving your sister there, but she told me all. I might have spent a month among the different tombs on every hand without finding the right one; but I hit upon a better plan in singing that old song which you told me once you liked so well. That is all. The rest you'll understand." She leaned with a sigh against the gnarled trunk, and her eyes wandered far

away, as though dreaming again that strange, unreal dream, with its facts so much more marvellous than fiction.

"No, no!" said Dr. Carleton, "Tell me why did you tempt me again in Naples? Tell me who was Zobeide, who so nearly wrecked my life?"

He asked it bitterly.

"I had forgotten Zobeide," Kittie Cosgrove replied. "After the death of Sir Edgar I thought—No, no, I cannot tell you! I went back to Bagdad. There I buried my heart for two years. Then I was sure it was all over, and I left Bagdad forever. I took with me four of my Persian servants, simply because they loved me, and did not wish to leave me. I went to Naples, hoping to live there to some purpose for the good of humanity, and to die in forgetfulness.

"The very first week I saw you there. I turned at first to run from Naples, but in the end I only ran to my Persian dyes and costumes, and thanked fortune that I had brought my Persian servants too. I could not help longing to see you again, and talk with you for a moment. I did see you, but I was angry with my heart that it throbbed so. I said, he has often deceived me. I said to my heart, I will crush you; now I will show you that he can deceive you again. It was cruel to you; yes, Dr. Carleton, I knew it then. But think how cruel you had been to me before!" She was sobbing.

"You had a right to distrust me," said Dr. Carleton. "You had a right to demand any test you

chose. I was only wondering with whom it was that I acted that shameful part."

She lifted her head suddenly and proudly. It was Ardavan again who commanded every faculty to instant composure.

"Had I borrowed an accomplice, you might truly hate me. No, no, Dr. Carleton; neither love nor hate could have driven me to that. Ardavan and Zobeide never saw each other but in the mirror. A little washing and flaxen hair made Zobeide of Ardavan. A little more washing, without the flaxen hair, has made me what I am. That last night I made you sleep for a half-hour with the Persian trick of mesmerism. It is a dangerous thing for a woman to understand. I shall never, never practise it again; but it served me so well in Jerusalem that I have forgiven it that it made me take a mean advantage of you. Do you remember how Sir Edgar turned, in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and followed me out of the building? Oh, all the will of my life I threw into my eyes when I saw your sister go to him, and knew she was giving up the flight. Thank God, I conquered him! I had not dared to disclose myself before, but then I told him all."

She was silent for a moment, then added, "And now I have told *you* all. Think it over well, Dr. Carleton. There is no obligation resting upon you. By and by, if you find that you do not despise me, write to the old address down in the village, or come and see me there, and let us know each other better, without a mask between us, before

we pledge a life-long promise which we do not understand."

She rose, and with that sudden and unexpected motion, by which Ardavan had so often disappeared, she turned away.

Dr. Carleton sprang to his feet, and clasped her in his arms.

"What!" he cried, looking deep into those lustrous eyes, "shall I let Kittie Cosgrove go again? Let Carrie Ashley go again? Let that blessed nurse at the hospital go? Let Ardavan and Zobeide go? Let the whole list of those who have been dear to me, every one in this wide world who has attracted my love and admiration, go at a single turn? Oh, no, no, no! Ten thousand times no! One parting with each has been bitter enough. I could not bear to part with all at once."

Let the diamond-flashing hand of the mysterious Ardavan throw the Persian curtain over the scene for a moment. We can only dream of the rest, till the pony phaeton in all its humble simplicity started down the hill toward Carleton Cottage, with two hearts that beat as one.

As they walked slowly across the lovely lawn, as in those days which memory could best recall, Osgood Carleton, to his unspeakable surprise, and to complete his cup of happiness, saw, unless his eyes deceived him, his old friend Guy Underwood, now a leading physician in a great Western city, sitting very close to Maime upon the distant veranda.

Ardavan could have told him who it was who found

Guy Underwood, and lifted his heart out of the dust with the story of Maime's heroic sacrifice, and who it was who had brought Guy Underwood again to Carleton Cottage to find in her true heart the one, the only one, in spite of all the years and all their vicissitudes. But Ardavan was bound in thoughts too delightful to be disturbed.

It may not be the lot of every one to love many and still love one ; but if with care and honesty we love as wisely as we love well, we shall find, not many, but all the world, — the passion of the East, the power of the West, the beauty of the Orient, the brilliancy of the Occident, truth, liberty, love ! Olympia, Indra, Heaven ! all ! in the one, the only one, we love.

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